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No. 240.

SONNET.

BY A. W. BELLAW.

So fairly fine all praises fail on her,
Her fairness finds a bourn, and her sweet mouth
Lures like some winsome summer in the South
Of bloom and perfume seen by dreamer far.
So fair is she I liken her to flush
Of dying music blown from sunset land,
That kingdom of an hour, to where we stand
While all the moods of being, hearing hush:
The smile that makes a splendor on her cheek
Is twin to the sweet peace upon her brows.
There is none like her, this your look allows.
What were impossible for her dear sake
I do not know. But this I know, so led
My love outlives all life, and she lies dead.

DAKOTA DAN,
THE RECKLESS RANGER;

OR,
The Bee-Hunter's Excursion.
A WILD TALE OF THE KEYS-PAHA COUNTRY.

BY OLL COOMES,
AUTHOR OF "BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HUR-
RICANE," "HAWKEYE HARRY," "DEATH-
NOTCH, THE DESTROYER," "ONE-ARM-
ED ALF," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNLUCKY RIDER.

SOUTHERN DAKOTA of the year 18—
A cottonwood grove on the Keys Paha river,
some thirty miles from its confluence with the
Niobrara.

Within that grove a score of persons were
assembled on a bright afternoon of a Septem-
ber day. All were Indians, with a few excep-
tions. The ponies browsing near bore strong
evidence of having been severely ridden. At
one side was a noble-looking horse of the new
American breed, caparisoned with an Ameri-
can saddle and bridle. His sides were dripping
with sweat, his flanks were white with foam
and quivering with over-exertion; his whole
frame shook under the throbbing of his great
heart; his nostrils were dilated and steaming—
he was panting with sheer exhaustion.

In the midst of the group of Indians was
the master of that noble beast. His hands
were securely bound at his back—he was a
prisoner. His face was haggard and dust-be-
grimed, yet wore a firm, determined and re-
solute look, that at times seemed to awe the
savage hordes around him. He was a man of some
five and forty years, of medium size, with a
pleasant, yet piercing, dark-gray eye; a thin,
angular face, the lower part of which was cov-
ered with a smooth, iron-gray beard. His
hair was of the same color as his beard, though
closely cropped, showing the outlines of a well-
shaped head. He was dressed in a citizen's
suit, which, was of itself, evidence of his not
belonging upon the border.

The savages were all Yankton Sioux. Some
were in war-paint—some were not. Their
leader was a white man, at whose very beck
and nod all seemed to act with humble obeis-
ance. He was a person upon whose face the
inner character was plainly written. It com-
bined every evidence of wickedness and subtle
cunning to be seen upon the dusky faces of his
coadjutors; and in every other countenance
but his, the prisoner could see a faint glimmer
of human feeling—a spark that he may have
kindled into mercy's hopeful light, had it not
been for the cold, relentless look upon White
Falcon's face.

White Falcon, as he was called by the In-
dians, and Donald Gray by his renegade asso-
ciates, was a man of some fifty years, judg-
ing from his seamed features, gray whiskers and
hair. But his movements, voice, and physical
powers were those of a man of thirty; and be-
tween the two, the prisoner was left in doubt
as to the man's age, but not as to his villainy
of heart.

That morning, Jonathan Duncan had been
thirty miles north of where he now found him a
captive. He was crossing the plain from the
Missouri river, unaware of his proximity to
danger, until he suddenly found that he was
being pursued by a band of Indians. He at
once put his horse to its utmost speed, feeling
certain of his ability to outstrip the Indians in
the race; and he did so for a short distance,
but he had underestimated the endurance of
the Indians' ponies, and after a race of a score
and a half miles, was overtaken on the banks
of the Keys Paha, where we now find them
assembled.

After he had been made prisoner, Duncan
was subjected to a series of blows, kicks and
taunts, given to test his courage and fortitude.
He bore all, however, with unflinching resig-
nation, and by looks defied the jeering horde
around him.

"The horse of the pale-face is fast, like the
arrow; but soon gives out. The ponies of the
Indian are slow, but like the bird, they can go
a long ways," philosophized a red-skin.

"Well," in a calm tone, replied Duncan, "if
that stream had been behind me instead of be-
fore, I am inclined to think the race would be
going on yet."

"A poor excuse is better than none," replied
White Falcon, indignant at the prisoner's re-
sponse.

"To be sure it is, mighty chief of the filthy
Yankton Sioux," retorted Jonathan, with dis-
dain.

"You are disposed to regard your situation
quite indifferently, stranger," asserted White
Falcon, "but—"

"But what, outcast of civilization?" inter-
rupted Duncan, defiantly, anticipating some
threat from the chief.

"Your insolent language shall be your death-
warrant," affirmed the chief. "While our po-
nies are resting from their hard ride, we shall



The Oracle, Patience and Humility.

endeavor to pass the time in trying your power
of endurance by fire and blood-letting. And,
to begin with, I will see what you have of val-
ue or consequence upon your person; then I
will pass you over to the tender mercy of my
braves."

So saying, the renegade chief proceeded to
search the person of the prisoner, and his labor
was not without reward. In a side-pocket he
found a small Derringer revolver, which he at
once appropriated. In another pocket he
found a small, time-worn picture-case. This
he opened, and was almost startled by the sight
of the picture that met his eyes.

It was of a young and beautiful woman, but
the style of her dress and the worn and faded
condition of the picture was evidence of its
having been taken years ago. For some time
the chief stood and gazed upon it. At times
his eyes wandered away with a vacant stare,
and his brows contracted as if he was trying to
recall something from the shadows of the for-
gotten past. In addition to the revolver and
picture, he found a note upon the captive bear-
ing date of a few weeks previous, and which
read:

"JONATHAN DUNCAN, Esq.:
"Dear Sir:—If your search proves unsuccessful
in Southern Nebraska, don't fail to visit the set-
tlement on the Niobrara river in Southern Da-
kota. I have some evidence of the parties hav-
ing drifted into that country. After a long and
diligent search, we have found the picture so
much desired, and send it herewith. I hope it
may prove the key to your success. The reward
has been increased to \$10,000.

"Your friend,
ADAM."
"Ten thousand dollars reward! Just so!"
ejaculated the chief in surprise. "I see now,
Jonathan Duncan, Esquire, that you are some
kind of a hound of the law, searching for
somebody for whom a reward is offered that'd
make a poor Indian chief rich; and may be it
will, for bless my soul if I don't know where to
lay my hands upon a young lady whose face is
the counterpart of this picture. And, as your
friend Adam surmises, she is in the Niobrara
settlement. Is it the original of this picture,
her father, mother, brother, sister or child that
you're in search of? Is he, or she, an heir or
heirress?—or an escaped convict, or what?"

"Or what," was the laconic reply of Jona-
than.
"Never mind, Squire Duncan," replied the
chief, placing the picture and paper in his
pocket. "We'll fetch the truth out of you pretty
soon. Fire around one's shins conduces to ve-
racity, and acts as a lubricator to one's tongue.
You can choose between the fire and the truth
of the facts connected with this picture and
paper."

"I have no choice, Sir Mighty Outcast," re-
plied Duncan. "You can act your pleasure."
"Then let my braves set the stake," the vil-
lain said, addressing his warriors.

A savage yell burst forth upon the air, and
a commotion of joy swayed the group of war-
riors. The wildest excitement and activity
pervaded the camp, all of which Jonathan
Duncan regarded with outward indifference.

His inward fears however, assumed painful
proportions, for he had not a doubt but that
his fate was sealed—that he stood face to face
with a horrible death. But he mentally com-
mended his soul to God and asked for strength
to bear his torture until death came to his re-
lief. He knew that a betrayal of fear, or an
appeal to the savages for mercy, would only be
prolonging his suffering.

He gazed around him—at the green trees
overhead, the murmuring river, at the slowly
declining sun soon to be blotted from his sight
forever. Then his gaze became fixed upon va-
cancy—he was thinking—perhaps of hope—of
bright faces that were wont to grow brighter

at his coming. He bit his lip to keep back the
emotions struggling upward in his breast.

The exclamation of an Indian suddenly drew
his attention from these painful reflections.

The savages were in commotion, and for the
time being, their attention was diverted from
their work by the appearance of an object on
the plain about half a mile to the northward.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORACLE, PATIENCE AND HUMILITY.
The grove in which the Indians were en-
camped was but a narrow belt of trees fring-
ing the shore of the Keys Paha, and as the
view of the plain was but little obstructed by
undergrowth, the savages could plainly see the
object approaching over the plain; and they
had no difficulty in making it, or rather them,
out; they were a man, horse and dog.

The man was walking and leading the horse,
while the dog skulked with lowered head and
tail at the heels of the latter. They were mov-
ing very slowly and with apparent difficulty,
and as they drew nearer the red-skins could see
that the horse was limping along upon three
legs. The man was white—this was easy
enough determined by the Sioux, long before
he came close enough for them to discriminate
between colors. He was coming directly to-
ward the point where they stood, and as he
came still closer, White Falcon, as well as the
prisoner, heard him suddenly break forth in a
song familiar to them, though a stranger to the
ears of the chief.

All listened intently, and something like a
smile, that came from a sting of remorse, swept
over the face of the renegade as he heard the
singer trill forth, in hoarse, discordant notes,
the words:

"Am I a soldier of the Cross,
A follower of the lamb?
"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the chief, trying to
dispar from his mind some vague recollection
of better days. "It's some crazy tramp, or old
religious fanatic. Well, we'll have some sport
with him too, boys, for I see he's coming on a
bee-line for this point. It may be he's coming
to say grace for your soul, Squire Duncan."

"Better say it for yours," was Duncan's re-
ply.

The stranger came on, apparently enraptured
by the music of his own voice. He entered
the grove and came on within ten paces of the
savages before he discovered their presence.
When he did, however, his singing ended with
a doleful squeak, and he came to a sudden halt.
Throwing up his hands in wild surprise, he
drawled forth in a hesitating, woe-begone tone:

"Whoa, Patience and Humility! At last,
at last, after long journeying through the des-
ert, we've struck the camp of the Philistines!"

In obedience to the command of their mas-
ter, the horse stopped, and the dog squatted on
his haunches at his heels.

A laugh burst from the lips of Gray and his
followers.

Duncan glanced at the bold intruder in vain
hopes that he might recognize him as a friend,
or one who had, in some manner, the power to
save him from death. But the sight that met
his view was anything but one calculated to
inspire hope in a desponding breast. In fact
the prisoner had never looked upon a more
wretched and pitiable specimen of humanity
than the being who had just halted in his pre-
sence.

He was a little, wiry-looking man of perhaps
five and fifty years, with a thin, long face, a
sharp, hooked nose, and small, steel-gray eyes.
His mouth was of unusual size and encircled
with a short, bristling gray beard. His whole
face was comical in its outlines, yet wore an
expression of childish simplicity. His eyes
were the most remarkable feature of the man.

They were possessed of a strange mobility—
now glittering with the keenness of a hawk's,
now glowing with the fierceness of the tiger's,
now beaming with the softness of a maiden's—
always relaxing into that dull, vacant stare of
one devoid of reason.

His dress was as old and antiquated as him-
self. On his head he wore a coon-skin cap, to
which had been attached the brim of an old
black felt hat. His coat was the remnant of a
fine black broadcloth garment; it was several
sizes too large for him, and hung upon him like
the proverbial "shirt on a bean-pole." The
sleeves were rolled up, displaying his bony
wrists, while the remaining half of the skirt
rested upon his heel. His pants were made of
buck-skin, but unlike the coat, were too small
for him, the shortness of the waist permitting
his shirt to foam gracefully out over the top.

One foot was encased in a moccasin, the other
in an old high-topped boot that he had doubt-
less picked up around some military post.

He carried no weapons of any kind except a
large, dull jack-knife, which was evidence of
his peaceful and harmless spirit.

His horse was as sorry a looking creature as
himself. It might have been a quarter of a
century old, judging from appearance. It was
raw-boned, long-legged and drawn up almost
into a knot. Every joint appeared to be stiff,
and every limb crippled in some way or other.

One of its fore legs was wrapped in a bandage
of old rags held in place by strips of fibrous
bark. It was with the greatest difficulty that
it put foot to the ground; and when ordered to
stop by its master, it did so with evident plea-
sure. It dropped its head and stubby tail,
closed its eyes and stood and slept in silence,
totally indifferent to the presence of the sav-
ages, or the myriad of flies that buzzed around.

A rope answered the purpose of a bridle, and
an old Indian blanket that of a saddle.

The dog was a fit companion of the man and
horse. He was a cross between the gray-
hound and spaniel, though a more abject and
cowardly-looking cur could scarcely be found.

With his head down, his tail between his legs,
he cowered at the heels of the horse, and
closed his great, bloodshot eyes and slept in
peace.

"Well, who are you that comes here singin'
like an escaped Bedlamite?" demanded White
Falcon, in feigned anger.

"Me! me!" demanded the doleful-looking
old tramp, in great astonishment; "why, man
of sin, I'm the Oracle of Peace come outen the
East to proclaim the—"

"The devil!" interrupted the renegade, sav-
agely. "You're lying, man; you're some infer-
nal old spy come sneakin' round here in dis-
guise."

The chief had resolved to convey this idea,
despite his belief that the Oracle was crazy, for
fear the man might have been trying to de-
ceive him. Insanity, however, showed itself
too plainly on every feature to be mistaken in
the character before him.

"Hark, man, to the voice of wisdom
speakin' thro' years of experience," the tramp
replied, shaking his bony finger reprovingly at
Donald Gray; "I come as you see me, plainly
clad—under no disguise. I come to plant the
seed of Peace and Christianity into the hearts
of the red heathens of America. I've suffered
many persecutions of body and mind to get
here, and the strength of Patience, my hoss
yere, and old Humility, my dorg thar, hev been
sorely tried with long sojournin'."

But at last, at last we've reached the camp of the benighted
red-man, and perchance a season of rest is
come to our weary bodies arter our pilgrim-
age."

"Well, from whence came you?" asked the
chief.

"Like John the Baptist, I came from outen
the wilderness of Judea."

"Indeed," replied the chief, to whom, and
the other renegades, the tramp's insane asser-
tions had become amusing; "well, Sir Oracle,
you look the worse of the wear and tear of the
trip."

"You speak truthfully, man of sin; and Pa-
tience, my horse here, and Humility, my dorg
thar, hev both been smartly reduced in flesh
and spirit—even more than me, for Patience,
my hoss thar, has carried me oftentimes; while
Humility, my dorg thar, has guarded me all
night from beasts of prey while I slept, and
that you mus' know's mos' awful rackin' on the
physical constitution."

"He looks as though he was a savage dog,"
said White Falcon. "I reckon he'd attack a
piece of raw meat quick enough, wouldn't he?"

"He may be hungering like his master, and
would eat that which is digestible if placed
within a git-atable distance. But since leav-
ing the fort called Randall, our supplies has
been exhausted, and we've been trustin' to
Providence for a long time."

"I'm thinking Providence'll let you starve
if you don't help yourself a little."

"Ah!" sighed the man, shaking his head,
"that is the doctrine of sin the world over.
But why is that man in bonds? Is he not a
heathen among you?"

"He is, but we're soon going to send his
spirit to the other world; to be plain, we're
going to roast him, and if you tarry long
enough your dorg can have—"

"Oh, Judea!" exclaimed the Oracle, elevat-
ing his hands in horror, and rolling his eyes
upward in evident pain, "can't I prevail on
you to let that man go free, that he may re-
pent of the deeds done in the body?"

"His sins, Sir Oracle," replied Gray, "are
the same as yours. He had the audacity to
intrude upon grounds sacred to the red-men."

"But perchance he came with evil in his
heart, whereas I come with love and good will
to'd all mankind, the beast of the field, the
birds of the air, and the dwellers in the sea;
and to preach to the benighted heathen of
Ameriky. Already hev I wrought much good
in my travels, though my footsteps hev been
beset with all the temptashins that beset the
pilgrim in his progress to heaven; yet I feel
good in spirit over my deeds."

"I observe that your language savors of ori-
ental refinement," said Donald Gray, who was
possessed of some education.

"Not so much as it used to be. Since I kem
into this ere land of the ungodly, my languidge
hes become korrupted—my words are not alers
the most elegant, nor my sentences the most
forcible; but they're sich as can only be un-
derstood by the heathens of the land. It's
thro' necessity, not of choice, that I'm rude into
my speech."

"I am inclined to think that you are a con-
summate old villain—a lying spy, trying to de-
ceive us with your insane palaver and idiotic
face. But that, let me tell you, you cannot
do. You already know too much to leave here
alive with that tongue of yours. Braves, see
that the old villain is secured against doing us
harm."

Ever ready to comply with the will of their
chief, the warriors started toward the Oracle,
who calmly folded his arms across his breast,
and striking an attitude intended for resig-
nation, but which was provokingly comical, he
said:

"I submit without resistance, you children
of benighted minds. Ye needn't bind me, for
I'm more'n willin' to remain. Thar is Patience,
my hoss here, and Humility, my dorg thar;
take 'em both—feed 'em, and with the respect
due their understandin'."

Patience, she comes
of noble blood; her sire was as fine a hoss as
ever pounded Arabian soil, and her dam—ah,
she war a noble critter too. And that 'are
dorg, bless me! I could trace his pedigree back
to Noah and the ark. To be sure I could.
But—and he turned to his animals—"Pa-
tience, go with the heathens—Humility, sub-
mit with Christian resignashin."

A savage led Patience to one side and hitched
her, while another fastened a lariar around
Humility's neck and tied him to a sapling.
The Oracle was not bound, for the chief had
not the slightest fear of his attempting to de-
sert. He was, in fact, fully satisfied of the
man's insanity, and of his perfect harmles-
ness.

The savages were about to resume their pre-
parations for the execution of Duncan, when
the Oracle interrupted them, saying:

"Friends, I want to leave yer camp durin'
the abominable execution of that man, if I'm
to leave at all. The smell o' burnin' martyrs
alers did make me sick as pisen. But if I'm
to die, let me die fast, and I'll show him how
to go it game, like the 'Postles of old'."

There were two other renegades in the party
besides Gray, whose recklessness of character
had banished all human feeling and mercy
from their hearts; and in the crazy tramp and
his poor old mare, they foresaw a bit of rare,
brutal sport. Sidling up to the chief, one of
them said:

"I say, Donald, let's have some fun with the
Oracle of Peace."

"How?"

"Give him a chance for his life—let him
win it in a hoss-race."

Donald winked his approval, then burst into
a roar of laughter over the idea.

It is not to be supposed that the Indians
were ignorant of what was being said. Sever-
al of them understood the English language,
and these interpreted to the others; so that all
were enabled to enjoy the sport together.

"Oracle," said Gray, addressing the tramp,
"Wouldn't you like a chance for life?"

"Verily, life are sweet, even to the vilest
critter that creeps, moves or has a bein'," re-
plied the man of peace.

"Wouldn't you be willin' to run your mare 'gainst one of our ponies for your life?"

"Oh, Judea! abomination! destruction!" groaned the Oracle, as if shocked by the idea. "Racin' and gamblin' comes not within the pale of the principles of peace and love. It belongs only to the ungodly—the unwashed sinner. Moreover, Patience, my horse here, is sufferin' dire afflictions on the right fore leg from the bite of the treacherous serpent that wears little bells onto its tail. Therefore I must decline to race with the heathens, and to uphold them in their ungodliness."

"Then you shall die, although you have your own life in your hands," said Donald Gray. "If you will take your mare and run her against one of our ponies, your life will be spared if you come out best in the race."

"Life are sweet, arter all," reflected the Oracle, "and I am sorely tempted to try you a heat, and would, if it wasn't for poor Patience's affliction of the leg. As she is, she can only hop along on three legs to a time. And yit I wouldn't hesitate to try one of yer slowest racers if ye'd give me a few hundred yards the advantage."

The renegades, and those of the Indians who understood English, indulged in a hearty fit of laughter. They saw that the love of life was strong, even in a crazy man; and that freedom was paramount to the principles he advocated.

"You can have your choice, Oracle: run the race or die."

"Oh, Judea!" sighed the man; "then if yer sin-blighted minds can conceive no Christian scheme for my deliverance outen bondage, I will stoop to the abominable sin of takin' my mare here, onto the track. But I have no hopes of takin' the ante, but race beca'se it's a Christian duty for me to try to save my precious life, for the benefit of others yit to come. So let a heathen bring out a slow racer, and I will run him, since I am forced to it; yet I proclaim in a voice of thunder that it be an abominable sin to put that poor critter thar onto the track. In course it be."

CHAPTER III.

THE RACE AND ITS RESULT.

WHILE the preliminaries of the race were being made by the Indians and their white coadjutors, the Oracle of Peace strode about the camp, apparently indifferent to the arrangements that were being made for the cruel sport of which he and his mare were the unsuspecting subjects. He passed and repassed before Jonathan Duncan, shaking his head and muttering loud, but incoherently, now and then glancing at the captive's face with the deepest expression of human sympathy.

"I swear," said Bill Davy, one of the renegades, "I believe the feller's talkin' Dutch to the squire."

"Yes, hog Dutch," replied Donald Gray. The Oracle continued his sauntering about the camp, but finally advanced to where Humility was tied, and stooping, he patted the dog affectionately upon the head, and said, in a low, whimpering, childish tone:

"Ah, me, Humility! this is a big blunder fur us to make. The hearts of these red Phillistines appear to have no mercy, whatsum-ever. So I reckon our time to part has come, arter long years of sojournin' together. I may, and I may not, win the race, but that snake-bitten leg of Patience is again' me, ten to one. But if ye hev to die, Humility, die game. Ye, maybe, go into the soup-kettle, but I'll make as good soup as ye hev company, these pesky heathens will have a delicious time. Look here, ole dog; see what an insignificant thing holds yer life in check—a little string which one sweep of my knife 'd cut."

As he concluded with a shake of the head, the crazy man took hold of the dog's rope and held it up between his fingers, and glanced at the dog, then at the rope, with a vacant, listless stare. Humility looked up into his master's face, dumb almost as his own, with an almost human apprehension; then he whined pitiously, licked his chops as with an air of satisfaction, and squatted down upon his haunches.

One may have thought that there existed the animal mode of communication between these two creatures, dog and master; but, aside from the latter's power of speech, neither betrayed the knowledge even of an intelligent animal.

"And lookee here, Humility, is another victim of this heathenish country," drawled the tramp, advancing to Duncan and laying his hand upon the captive's head. "Poor feller, the Phillistines have got him, too, doggy, and he'll hev to die, I s'pekt. And jist look here, Humility, what a insignificant thing stands atween him and life and freedom!" and he took hold of the captive's bonds and fingered over them some time in an easy, thoughtless manner; but the chief saw that he made no attempt to free the captive.

"All ready, Sir Oracle," the chief at length called out.

"Amen," was the grave, solemn response. Then the tramp advanced to where his mare was hitched, unfastened her and followed White Falcon and all but two of his warriors, who had been left to guard Duncan, to the edge of the open plain.

With a critical eye he scanned the opponent's horse, shook his head doubtfully, and sighed, in a tone whose ingenuitiveness was in consonance with that of his face:

"Verily, Patience, the chances are against us, a thousand to one. The red heathens' horse is keen of limb, young, supple, and free of snake-bites. Our only chances lay in the smoky Phillistine's horse steppin' into a mole-hill and breakin' of his neck. And while we are certain of defeat, we are liable to run into the mole-hole-hill ourselves. Lord, to be sure we are!"

A savage outburst of laughter followed this lamentation of the Oracle.

"Verily, heathen with the smoky skin, the day 'll come, perchance, when the laff will be shifted to the other side of thy facial openin'."

The distance to be run was a quarter of a mile. The ground was stepped off by one of the renegades and the racers escorted to the starting point by several warriors on foot. The Oracle led his mare to the place, and as she hobbled along at times on three legs, the Indians and renegades seemed transported with merriment at sight of the doleful-looking figure presented by both the master and the beast.

With some difficulty, after suffering a severe fall, the tramp succeeded in scrambling to the back of his mare. He then turned the animal facing the winning goal, and announced his readiness to start.

A deep silence now fell upon the plain, notwithstanding the ridiculousness of the affair. The firing of a rifle by the renegade chief, who was at the opposite end of the course, was to be the signal to start. The Oracle sat with his eyes fixed upon the group at the other side of the plain, burning with a strange, unnatural luster. Suddenly he saw a little cloud of smoke puff out upon the air; then, as the

clear report of the rifle came quivering forth upon the breeze, the Oracle was heard to shout aloud, in a clear, unnatural voice, the single word:

"Go!" Quick as a flash Patience's eyes flew open, her head was lifted, her ears became erect, her form straightened out, and like an arrow she shot away over the plain by the side of her opponent. All her stupidity, stiffness and lameness had vanished under the magic of her master's voice.

Yell after yell arose from the lips of the spectators, that was answered by a wild, frenzied shout from the lips of the Oracle, who sat half doubled upon his beast, while his coat-tail flapped in the wind behind, and his hat-brim dropped like a mask over his face. To the amusement of those at the starting point, the great "military" boot of the tramp slipped from his foot at the second bound of his mare, but he gave no heed to this, and sped on.

The yells of the savages increased as the racers sped on, but their yells were outbursts of surprise, not the expression of the amusement that they had anticipated; for, side by side with the Indian racer, sped Patience, the face of her rider changing from its look of imbecility to that of silent triumph.

"This beats you, now don't it, smoky-skin!" the Oracle suddenly called out to his opponent in a tone that was distinctly audible above the swish and thud of the horses' feet through the grass and upon the hard earth.

"Ugh!" was the response of the Indian, who, with eyes starting with excitement, laid the whip vigorously across his beast.

"That's it, Ingin, score it on," continued the Oracle, growing warm under the excitement of the race; "alers whip on the hairy side, smoky. Ole Patience, my mare here, wa'n't as lame as ye thought, war she! Like all females, she's deceivin', ain't she? She can't be beaten on these prairies a-runnin' and playin' 'possum, can she? Whew! aren't we a-salin', though, now! I could jockey you now, Ingin, like thunderation; but I won't, will I? But I'll tell ye what I can do: I can beat you, and I'm goin' to do it. So now, ole gale, toe into it—buckle right down to the work, Patience—peg away, ole critter—scatter dirt in smoky's eyes—lick her down, Pacie—scat! whoop, hurrah, here we go—good-by, smoky!"

Away from the side of the Indian, like a bird on the wing, glided the mare with her rider. The spectators were astounded. Donald Gray began cursing with impetuous rage. He discovered his mistake when too late. He and his men had been duped. The cunning old tramp and his trained mare had played their parts well.

As he saw the Oracle turn from the track and sweep away like the wind across the plain, White Falcon's rage knew no bounds. He fairly fumed, cursed his own stupidity and that of his men, calling the wrath of heaven upon them.

Like a madman he tore away toward the camp to procure his own beast, an animal of remarkable speed, to start in pursuit of the cunning old tramp. But when he reached the camp, what was his astonishment to find that his animal was gone!

He turned to make inquiry regarding it, of Duncan's two guards. They were not there, and, to add to his fury and astonishment, he discovered that both Jonathan Duncan and the dog Humility were gone.

A glance at the straps with which the dog had been tied showed the imprint of teeth upon it. This led to the discovery that it had been gnawed in two. Further investigation showed that Duncan's bonds had also been severed by the dog's teeth.

Then the chief could account for the absence of his horse: Duncan had escaped upon it. In this he was right; although two guards had been left with the captive while the others went to attend the race, their curiosity got the better of their sense of duty, and the moment they heard the yells and shouts of their friends, they deserted their post and ran to the edge of the plain where they could see what was going on.

This proved even more fortunate than the tramp had hoped for; it left the clear for the dog to act its part. And no sooner did the sagacious animal hear his master's voice shouting in triumph, out upon the plain, than he applied his teeth to his bond, and in a moment snapped it in two. Then, still remembering the silent demands of his master, he sprang forward and gnawed Duncan's thongs off his wrists.

The captive could scarcely realize what had transpired—that an animal could possibly have so much human understanding, and before he was cognizant of the fact, Humility was gone.

Realizing that he was free, Duncan knew that not a moment was to be lost in putting distance between himself and the red-skins, and selecting a fleet-looking stud from among the Indians' ponies, he mounted it and fled. He shaped his course along the river until a point of timber jutting out into the plain would conceal him from view of the savages; then he turned into the open prairie and sped away up the Keya Paha on the trail of the Oracle and his dog.

He rode rapidly forward for nearly an hour. No sign of pursuers could be seen. At length he turned into the woods again, and halted to rest his jaded beast and take his bearings for a point of safety.

A voice hailed him. "I say, stranger," it said, "you made yer 'scape, did ye? Things all worked like clock-wheels, didn't it though?"

It was the voice of the Oracle, who at this juncture rode up. Humility was following in his accustomed place at Patience's heels.

"Thank Heaven, my dear sir," Jonathan Duncan exclaimed, in a tone full of gratitude and joy; "you are the most original piece of human deception I ever met. I never saw a more perfect specimen of imbecility than you were outside of an insane asylum. You have saved my life, stranger, and in a manner that seems miraculous."

"Then Humility, my dog thar, did his work up skienfintically, did he? Done jist as I hinted to him, did he? He didn't act awkward 'bout it, did he? By Judea! that was a good thing we both had a smatterin' of low Dutch, wa'n't it? I told ye I'd git ye outen thar, didn't I? That renegade pretty nigh took the hint when I war mutterin' to 'ou. The red devils had you purty tight tho'; and it's well I see'd 'em chasin' ye across the plain. I see'd ye war 'bout blowed, and knowed they'd rake ye in down at the river, and when I heard 'em screchin' I knowed ye were raked, and I jist slipped down the river, and seein' you war in for a fry, I concluded to come foolly on 'em. Good thing I had 'em ole close handy—played the oracle well, didn't I? But I swear I came mortal nigh rippin' out an ole-fashin' cuss-word several times. Oriental langwid! hal! hal!—that's good on the chief, ar'n't it? But, I'll tell ye, stranger, Patience, my mare here, and Humility, my dog thar, are two the best-trained animals outside of Barnum's big s'c'v

—good as ever boxed sod, or squeezed the jugular of a red-skin. Why, Patience, my mare here, is the fleetest critter in all Dakota, and I'll bet my scalp on her every clip. See, she gits herself better'n she did, don't she? Humility, my dog thar, has a thunderin' site of man-gumshum 'bout him, ar'n't he?—say, what be your name, stranger?"

"Jonathan Duncan. May I ask the same of you?" replied Duncan.

"To be sure, Jonathan; speak right out. You see, I'm a stranger in these diggin's, myself. I've jist come down from the north-west to this kentry. But up thar, Jonathan—away up in the northern part of this territory, I war familiarly called Dakota Dan, the Ranger; and I swear to the stars, Jonathan, Patience, my mare here, and Humility, my dog thar, are three jolly sailors. Yes, I'm Dakota Dan, and proud I be of the name and the man too, Jonathan. Here, yer hand. Shake to eternal friendship."

(To be continued.)

The Beautiful Sphinx:

OR,
THE MAN-SPIDER OF WIRTHMOOR.

A TALE OF EARLY ST. LOUIS.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "STEALING A HEART," "HERCULES, THE HUNCHBACK," "PEARL OF PEARLS," "THE SILVER SERPENT," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ASTOUNDING REVELATION.

JEAN BANQUO smiled grimly as he pronounced the identity of his visitor, and the serpentine stick revolved more rapidly in his yellow hand.

She threw aside her veil with a gesture of surprise.

"Since you so easily discovered who I am, perhaps you can tell me what brought me here, Jean Banquo?"

"That is not difficult," answered the gnome. His little eyes twinkled. "Be seated nigh me, and we will talk about it."

He motioned her to a high hassock beside his divan, and continued, when she was seated. "I have read of your coming, in the stars, Francoise Elory. Your visit to me is one of inquiry—you are worried, too."

"Cease your mummeries, Jean Banquo; I do not believe in your professions. But—yes, I am here to make certain inquiries."

"So," pursued the astrologer, nodding. "And you wish to know something of a closet hidden in the house where you now live, and which, you suppose, contains important secrets connected with your deceased father?"

"Ah! by what sorcery?"

"Oh, I know—I am fully aware of the cause of your coming."

"Pah! it is a mere inference," exclaimed the beautiful blonde, impatiently; "you sent this letter to my uncle"—and here she produced the note from the astrologer to the banker.

"It is in reference to a secret closet in the house that is my home. Azrak, my uncle's man, came to you last night and secured the instructions I promised. They opened the closet, and were confronted by a fearful shape that frightened my uncle out of his senses."

"How happened your uncle to be so well posted?" interrupted Banquo.

"Through my maid, who is devoted to me," replied Francoise, promptly and sternly.

"And you followed your uncle to the paneled room?"

"They had no right to conceal from me the secrets of my father. My maid, Viola, also followed them after I withdrew."

"After you fainted and was carried to your room," corrected the gnome, impressively.

Francoise looked at him amazed.

"How did you find that out?" she demanded, in a quick breath.

"My maid, Francoise Elory. Presently we will get at your exact business here. Remember, Jean Banquo, the astrologer, knows more than some people dream of, or would wish him to know. For every soul on earth there is a star in the skies; every star has a page upon its face that only men like me may read. Stars and souls are the two unsolved problems of the universe—the first a record of some human fate, the second a kaleidoscope of thought, governed by the same unseen power that holds each constellation above its subject among the dust, the bloom, or the light, or the dark of Nature. Go on, Francoise Elory."

"My maid," said Francoise, who was mute during the brief, singular speech of the gnome, "has not been seen since she left me to complete what I had not the strength to continue. She has disappeared. I fear some injury has befallen her."

"Probably," hinted the astrologer, meaningly. "If she dogged the doings of Hubert Ulster, and was caught, he is the man to silence her tongue forever, and by a deed as foul as human brain can conceive."

"Explain yourself, Jean Banquo. What makes you denounce my uncle as a bad man?" She asked this in a slow but eager way, and gazed sharply into the gnome's little, gleaming eyes.

"Wait. Your business; then I will speak."

"This afternoon," Francoise resumed, "when my uncle and Azrak went out, I ascended to the paneled room. The door was locked; but I looked through the keyhole, and saw, on the opposite wall, one of the panels hanging outwards—at the spot where the dreadful object appeared in the closet. But the wall was still solid with another panel, and on it was a sheet of paper bearing the words: 'If you enter, you die.' By the fact of this warning being there, and as the door was locked, I judge that my uncle has not yet entered the closet for the accomplishment of his purpose, whatever that purpose may be. Now, first: what has become of my maid, Viola? If you are sorcerer enough to imagine, second: what is there in the closet, which my uncle is desirous of keeping from me, and which you, very strangely, seem to be the only person cognizant of—and by what means can I gain access to it? Finally, what, or who, was that ugly fiend in the wall, that so terrified my uncle—for he shrieked aloud, and became insensible—what is there between it and him that it should so affect him? I heard him cry: 'The Spider! The Spider!' Answer me these questions, Jean Banquo."

The gnome smiled again. There was a vindictive glitter in his eyes now, and the wreathing of his lips was like that of a snake's fangs, betraying the anger and conflict of pestering thoughts.

"Francoise Elory," he said, and there was a harsh strain in his tone, "two of your questions I will answer—the third, or first one, I cannot. The serpent stick went round still faster in his hand; his eyes seemed changing hues, melting, firing, expanding, like orbs of red hot iron alternating their glow in the heat

and cold of rising, half-pent passion. He was striving hard to control himself. "Hubert Ulster—your uncle, as the world calls him—is a base wretch to his heart's core—Wait! Keep your seat"—for Francoise, alarmed by his sudden vehemence, his hissing syllables, his blazing eyes, had started back—"you need not fear me; Jean Banquo hears you no ill-will. Hubert Ulster found out, by some means unknown to me, that Eli Elory had a secret closet in his house, where he stowed several thousand dollars in bright, ringing coin. It is that he seeks, and it is that he would rob you of it. I have spied in his house when he slept; I have, more than once, held a dagger at his throat when he dreamed dark dreams in the hour of midnight."

"Terrible man!" For what?" gasped Francoise.

"For my revenge—but it was not to come in that way. I chanced upon the paneled room that way skulking in the upper story, and I chanced again on a small plug in the floor, near the door, underneath which I found a wire. By pulling on this wire I next discovered the closet. But, I have destroyed that spring. There is now only one way to enter the closet, and that by swinging out the mantelpiece in the next room which will give access at the side of the closet. There is a vase sitting on the mantelpiece that has been allowed to remain there ever since Eli Elory died. Turn this vase round twice, and the wall will open. The chimney-hole above the mantelpiece does not open into a flue, but is a ventilator to the hidden closet."

"Ah!" Francoise exclaimed, as if her memory just then recalled an item of the past, "how well I remember; the room of which you speak was never occupied while my father was alive; and I often wondered, when I was a child, why he insisted that the old vase should remain and be untouched on the mantelpiece. This then was its mystery."

"I overheard your uncle and his tool, Azrak, speaking of the closet," Banquo continued, in his rapid accents. "I learned that they had been searching for it for nearly nine years. It has been in my power to gain possession of the money—for I have seen it in its leathern, tight-fisted bags—but Jean Banquo is not a thief. When I sent that note to Hubert Ulster yesterday—and here the flame of his eyes, the heaving of his breast, the hot breath of his words grew deeper and direr—"I wanted him to come. I had laid a trap for his death! stay!—I say you need not fear me." Francoise had arisen and stepped backward, awed, and now dreading the harsh-voiced, fiery-eyed, terrible spoken dwarf.

"You ask who or what the hideous shape was that you, that he and this man saw in the wall? First, let me tell you that Hubert Ulster is not your uncle—"

"Jean Banquo!"

"There is not one drop of blood in his family that ever ran in yours! He is an impostor. To serve his own purposes, he has proclaimed the relationship. Nearly ten years ago he came to St. Louis, and after a brief business acquaintance became one of the directors of the Merchants' Bank. When Eli Elory died, Ulster succeeded to his position as president of the bank. Your father and he were intimate—that was all. Eli Elory did not know that he was confiding his little daughter—then not more than ten years old—to the guardianship of a black-hearted villain, a hypocrite, an assassin! Hubert Ulster is no less! Remember this; I reveal it for your welfare. I know Hubert Ulster. I know him too well—and, oh! how I hate—I hate him!"

The astrologer was quivering from head to foot. His long beard shook like a spray of thistle-down in a fierce blast, and his hands trembled till the end of the long wand rattled on the floor. Under the wash that hitherto softened his complexion, he was red and fairly purple, and his teeth ground out every word like stony corn-grains crushed between the jaws of a horse. A hatred deadly, ungovernable and frightful, seethed in his dwarfish form, burning to the center of his soul, and, for the moment, rendering him speechless.

Francoise was riveted. His outburst chained her in shudders. She could not return the unvarying gaze of those flaming, unearthly eyes, horribly enchanted by them, and held in a clammy spell.

"You want to know what the shape was?" he gibbered, his voice, like his frame, shaking and passion-strung. "You heard your uncle call it 'The Spider'! It is a thing he has cause to shrink from—yet it is human. That 'Spider' is a man—a man with a heart of feeling, that loved, that was once tender and affectionate, a heart turned to a boiling furnace of rage and vengeance by Hubert Ulster!"

CHAPTER IX.

A SHOT FROM THE DOORWAY.

THE banker and the African had ascended to the cupola-observatory on the roof above the art gallery.

They had come to seek Jean Banquo in pursuance with the resolve of Ulster, who meant to purchase his advice before forcing open the wall in the paneled room, in defiance of the warning they saw there.

They had been but a few minutes in the observatory—and Hubert Ulster was poking about among the singular instruments strewn there—when Azrak said:

"A word, Master Hubert: listen to me."

"Eh! What is it? See this, Azrak—and this"—tapping here and there with his cane. "The furniture of this place suggests that Jean Banquo may be a practical astronomer, as well as fortune-teller."

But Azrak was paying no attention to the various objects surrounding them. He was very sober, and his dark eyes were of a thoughtful glance.

"I have seen what you did not," he pursued. "I have made a discovery, Master Hubert."

"Oh, you've made a discovery! Well, what is it?" continuing his examination of the disordered instruments.

"I know how to reach the den of the astrologer, without the aid of a guide."

The effect of the speech was electrical.

"Hut Azrak!"—Ulster spoke quickly, and grasped him by the arm. "What's that you say? Tell me what you have seen?"

"When the disguised woman, Girasa, went into the alcove, she was too hasty in her desire to escape us. She did not draw the curtains tight enough. As we ascended these stairs, I looked back, and saw—"

"You saw—what did you see, Azrak?"

"Through a narrow space in the curtains, I saw her swing out the great picture against the wall, and disappear beyond it."

"Hut you did! What then? Ah! that is the way to the den of Jean Banquo. I see."

Azrak nodded wisely.

Ulster nervously stroked his chin for some seconds, gazing down at the ferule of his cane on the floor. When he looked up, there was a snap in his eyes and a keenness to his voice.

"Azhak," he said, in a rapid tone, "why could we not find out something of this char-

latan? Since you know the way to reach him—by Jupiter! we may get at some of his secrets, view him in his solitary trickeries; for he is a man of secrets, beyond question."

Azrak inclined his head a second time.

"We may learn, too, who this woman is, disguised as a negress and in the service of the astrologer. I'll swear that I have met her before, when she wore a white face."

"We will be wary, Master Hubert, and pry into the stronghold and doings of Jean Banquo, for the benefit of a community deluded by his impostions."

"Yes; that is it, Azrak. If we are caught, we are two strong men, and can fight our way out despite any sorceries he may practice upon us. Good. It is settled. We will unmask this abominable wizard!—How dark it grows!"

"The sun has gone down, Master Hubert. See: is not that a grand prospect?"—waving his hand eastward toward the rolling Mississippi, to the south over the chimneyed city, to the west, where lay the open country, its horizon redolent as gilded lava with the gorgeous hues of sunset.

"Very fine. But how can we manage in the dark?"

"We shall have another light here, pretty soon—more than we want."

"What do you mean?"

"The beacon of the astrologer."

"His beacon?" repeated Ulster, inquiringly.

"Every night, at the time of his reception of visitors, this cupola is illuminated, and can be seen at a great distance in all directions."

"A lighthouse!" Ulster exclaimed. "What was that, Azrak?"

"The astrologer's bell," replied the African, listening. "Girasa is dismissing the people in the gallery. Look over here, and you may see them depart"—stepping to the front rail of the platform, which was directly at the eaves, where, by glancing downward, a full view of the street was plain.

Ulster and the mulatto watched the throng passing out. In the increasing dusk of evening they could not be seen, at that height, by those on the pavement, and possibly not by parties in the opposite building.

It was Ulster's intention to remain there till all had gone, and Girasa was off her guard, when they could proceed with their plot to ferret into the privacy of the astrologer—a dangerous plot, for they had yet to learn the ways and traps and means of defense at the command of Jean Banquo.

"Banquo has an early visitor to-night," said Azrak, who observed the cab that came furiously along the street and drove up to the door.

"Yes. Quiet, now," admonished the banker, withdrawing from the edge and listening. They stood like carved specters in the gloom—waiting.

Suddenly Hubert Ulster staggered back and clapped his hands to his eyes. There was a peculiar, hissing, crackling noise in the air around them; tiny sparks seemed dancing here and there, like shooting stars; in another second, the burners of artificial gas-lamps, arranged in a semi-circular row breast-high, flashed forth a brilliant, blazing glare that nearly blinded the banker and the African, and startled them by its intensity.

The illumination was caused by the action of Girasa when she entered the closet containing the coated jars in the saloon below. The means by which she lighted the reflector-burners in the cupola, instantaneously and from such a distance, was a mode afterward brought into extensive application by Prof. Pepper, of the London Polytechnic Institute.

"Hush!" whispered Azrak, grasping his employer by the arm. "Step back—quick, or we will be discovered. Look." He pointed to the house opposite, where their two shadows, colossally defined, showed upon the wall.

"Let us descend, Master Hubert. All is silent below."

And at the moment Girasa led Francoise Elory from the gallery through the door behind the picture in the alcove, Azrak was looking from the interior of the curtains that draped the narrow stairway leading to the cupola.

"Now is our time," said the African.

"Go ahead," and he followed Azrak, who was gliding swiftly toward the alcove.

"Haste, before she starts to return," the African urged, as they began descending the stairs in the room beyond the picture.

my father, Roderick Wirth, of Wirthmoor, England; he broke the heart of my sister. I have sworn to avenge myself upon him, and the time will come soon. I have known two crosses in my life, that have changed me to the hungry, stinging serpent I am; the first, desertion by the woman I loved—a devilish Sphinx, who once stabbed your lover, Coco Vargas, in Cairo—the second, the murder of my father by the man who paid vain suit to my sister—

"What do you know of Coco Vargas?" broke in Francoise, infused with excitement by the rapid, sharp-edged speeches of the gnome. "Enough to warn you that he is not the man for Francoise Elly to marry—a gambler, and perhaps worse; while you are good and pure. But never tell him I said this. Give back your love to Montrose, the model maker, and you will do well. But, it is not of Coco Vargas we are speaking—it is of myself. You want to know what the ugly deformity was that you, that Hubert Ulster and Azrak, saw in the wall? I'll tell you. It was Tyron Wirth, son of Roderick, called the 'Spider of Wirthmoor.' Behold!—I am the Spider!"

As Jean Banquo almost shouted the last, he tore off his copious turban and great beard, and ran to a basin on a skeleton stand behind his divan. In a trice, he had washed the false colors from his face, and when he turned again upon Francoise—with his mass of midnight hair disheveled, his eyes afixe and aglow in passion, his dwarfed body crooked, and yellow hands working convulsively—she uttered a scream of terror and shrunk back, back to the stony wall; for she saw the hideous Spider, the same ghastly, wolfish, vulture-featured object that had caused her to swoon affrighted in the upper story at her home on the bygone night.

But Jean Banquo had no sooner effected this transformation, revealing his true character—and the shriek had scarce issued from the lips of the frightened girl, when an unexpected denouement capped the startling tableau.

Bang! went a pistol through the crack of the door.

There was a *whiz!*—a *thud!*—the astrologer uttered a piercing, curdling wail and reeled drunkenly backward, tossing his arms and wildly clawing the air.

In the same breath, Hubert Ulster bounded into the chamber, with the smoking weapon clutched by the muzzle, ready to beat out the brains of the man he had shot.

"Aominable Spider!" he cried, excited and wrathful, "your words are lies. That bullet is from the man you have pursued and haunted and menaced for a crime he never committed! Die!—and curse you!"

CHAPTER X.

THE BEAUTIFUL SLAVE.

THE city of Cairo, in Egypt, about eleven years before the events which we have narrated.

City of glittering domes and minarets, fragrant thickets, bowers of foliage, groves of palm and gardens of dates; of wooden-latticed balconies, fountained courts, Saracenic architecture eternal and wonderful; city of hymns, symbols and spirits of imagery, spiced with the soft aromas of the Orient, redolent with the dream-sonnets of Persian poets and Arabic chroniclers—the magic theater of countless adventures by Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid; kissed by the dun waters of the Nile, edged by the sandy oceans of the Lybian and Arabian Deserts, track-blazed by pyramids, and lighted by a sky as hot as the breath of bubbling fountains.

City of Al Mansur, home of the Turk, the Greek, the Jew, the Arab and the Moor; rendezvous of the Abyssinian, slave-mart of the Nubian, head-quarters of the traveler—the English, the American, the German, the French, a score of nations blending like the rivers with one commonality, curious, fantastic, grave, wretched and happy—monument of centuries, half-dressed, unchanging, weirdly picturesque, the gateway to the wildly desolate and blood-scorching plains of the great Sahara.

And thither we take the reader, at a date eleven years back, to the Arab quarters, with its strange population, costumes that near a thousand years have not altered, the narrow, box-like shops, the cramped stores of the omnipresent Jew—and to the office of Coco Vargas, a Spanish trader, who had amassed a large fortune by his camels, in the export and import of spices, fruits and merchandise. A dingy-looking affair—yet it was the office of Coco Vargas, the trader, who was known at every bazar, and to every donkey-driver, and whose Nubian slaves lived better than many of his own customers.

The hour, sunset. Vargas had closed his office earlier than usual, and was walking before the Great Square of Cairo, which he customarily went round on his way to his home in the Frank quarters. From the minarets came the cry: "God is great! God is merciful! Mahomet is the Prophet of God!"

But the cry, nor the bustling throng of Turks, Copts and Moderns moving to and from the narrow streets, did not engage him. His eyes were fixed on a bow-backed Jew, a short distance ahead, whom he seemed desirous of overtaking.

Whatever were his thoughts they were not of a pleasant humor, for he frowned, he was muttering, at every step, he swung his arms, with their clinched fists, stroke-like at his sides, and occasionally snarled something from his working lips, of doubloons, camels, Jews, cheats and soundrels.

"Ho, there! Ezrontis—halt!" he called out, at length.

But the Jew did not, or would not, hear.

"Ezrontis! Jew! Thief! Swindler! Halt, I say!" and by a sudden leap, he laid his hand, heavy and iron-like, on the shoulder of the man he pursued, jerking him roughly around.

"Caramba! Jacob Ezrontis—I have you!"

The Jew uttered a low cry of surprise and fear; but instantly there appeared an humble grin in his weasel face, wrinkling his sparse beard nearly above his eyes, and he whined:

"Ah! Oh! Senor Vargas—my good senor—how you do-to-day! I am so glad to see you. Let go of my shoulder, please."

"Ho! you grin at me, Jacob Ezrontis. Do you know who it is?—Coco Vargas, who loaned you five hundred doubloons, pure Spanish coin, thirteen months ago. You made over to me a bill against your camels and your house, and promised to return the money in six months. I have not seen you since. You have been playing hide and seek, you rogue!"

"Ah! my good Vargas, I haf travel so far. I was a rich man when I went after gum. But den I was fooled bad. I lose everything—everything. I am poor, so poor, my good Vargas; and I haf suffered a heap."

"What do I care for that?" growled the Spaniard.

"Nothing, nothing!" and Ezrontis shook his head in a sorrowful way.

"I want my dues, Jacob Ezrontis. Where are my doubloons? Caramba! where are the camels? Hey?"

"All gone, all gone!" wailed the Jew, dole-

fully, and wringing his hands. "I haf been robbed by de wild men—Bedouins—thieves—I haf nothing left. I shall starve!"

"You lie, Jacob Ezrontis! you are well-fed and fat. You vile cheat! I will have what belongs to me. You have been robbed. You have spent my doubloons and lost your camels. Caramba! your house—I will take your house."

"Ah! you cannot do that," said the Jew, in a mournful tone, but bowing his head to conceal the sly twinkling of his eyes. "I came back to Cairo so poor, so starving, that I be most dead. I must haf eat and drink, so I haf sell my house, that I may live."

"Infernal villain!" snapped Vargas.

"Ah! no, I am no villain, my good, my dear Vargas. I haf only been at Cairo to-day. You think I would rob you—Got! no. Tomorrow I would pay you as much and more as you gif me. I will deal so very fair. I haf something beautiful for you."

"Something beautiful? I don't want it!" Vargas grieved, tightening his hold on the shoulder of the Jew till the latter winced.

"What have you got? Will it pay me as much as your camels?—as much as five hundred doubloons? Tell me that, you dog!"

"More, more, much more—Blessed let go of my shoulder. It is a grand gift, my good Vargas: a slave so like an angel, that if she would get some wings, she would 'a' fly away!"

"A slave? Furies of thunder!"—and he gave a squeeze with his gripping hand that made Ezrontis squirm—"I don't want any more slaves; I have enough. What of my doubloons, Jacob Ezrontis? Tell me, or I shall send you to the devil!" and here he raised his ponderous fist under the hawkish nose of the cringing man.

"Stay, stay, my good Vargas," the Jew hastened to say, with a wry face, "wait till you haf see her. Such beauty—oh, grand!"

"Caramba! dogs eat you and your slave! I want my money."

"But, she is not a Nubian," Jacob persisted.

"Oh, not a Nubian?"

"Nor a Georgian?"

"Nor a Georgian!" echoed Vargas.

"An English girl, my good Vargas, sweet as the princess of a harem."

"Ho! an Englishwoman. Caramba! Jacob Ezrontis, do you mean to tell me that you have an Englishwoman who is your slave per force of purchase?"

"Yes, yes, that is it."

"And what if I inform the consul? You will be punished, you Jew!"

"No, no, no, you would not tell—hey, good Vargas? She is for you. For you I buy her with my last piaster, this angel—lovely as the sun, fair as the rose. If you would 'a' see her, you go mad, you are so happy."

The cunning Jew, Ezrontis, was well aware of the soft spot in Coco Vargas' heart, who had been extravagantly fond of pretty women in his own country, and who—being once infatuated to madness—had followed the daughter of an American tourist for hundreds of miles, in the vain hope of finally possessing her for a wife. A man of passionate nature, he was quick to bite at the bait now offered; to talk of a woman dazzling as the sun and fair as a rose, and of English blood, was to interest him immediately.

"Let me hear that again, Ezrontis. You have a beautiful English girl?"—and now he shifted his tight hold on the Jew's shoulder to a familiar pluck by the sleeve—"so lovely that she is worth more than doubloons, camels or houses?"

"Yes, my good Vargas; and she is for you. She will pay you twenty times for what you haf lost so I will swear."

"But where did you get her!—of whom?—how? with a fidget that betrayed jealous attention."

"From a wandering tribe of the Ayneseh. But when you shall come to my house, I tell you more. You shall see her."

"Yes, Haste, Ezrontis. Caramba! let me look at the English girl."

Vargas became suddenly calm and grave. He was thoughtful. The loan of doubloons, or their security, the camels, seemed to be forgotten; his wrath over his loss was appeased for the time. In truth, the Spaniard's imagination was already at work; he was eager to gaze on the promised prize.

The house of the Jew was not very far from the Great Square, and Vargas was not so absorbed that he failed to perceive it was in another locality than the former abode of his debtor, which convinced him that Ezrontis had, indeed, sold his old residence, either to save himself from starvation, as he affirmed, or to escape prosecution, which was most likely. Like nearly all the houses, it was built with the second story projecting over the first, supplied, also, with one of those fibrous balconies like screens of woven bark.

Entering here, Ezrontis brought forth narghilehs, and proceeded to whiff the grateful vapor. Vargas, whose impatience was unbounded and growing, waved aside the proffered hospitality, but drank copiously of sherbet, to which he helped himself.

"Be about this," he said, when he had smacked his lips over the draught. "Bring out your jewel, Ezrontis—your combined sun and rose. You lose time."

"Presently, my good Vargas," returned the Jew, as he hung a tiny bell.

A lithe young Nubian answered the summons, to whom Ezrontis gave some instructions in a low tone.

There was a long delay, and the Spaniard was moving restlessly, when the door opened again, and the Nubian returned, bearing a roll of light, rich carpet and a rug of marvelous workmanship. These he spread upon the floor before the Jew and the Spaniard; after which, he lighted a number of burners around the apartment, and softly withdrew.

"Caramba! Jacob Ezrontis, we are going to have a show?" grumbled Vargas, looking at the rug, at the Jew, at the mellow lamp-flames that were diffusing a luscious odor through the room, and beginning to tire of waiting.

The Jew nodded his half-bald head, and smiled cunningly.

"Y-e-s," he drawled, composedly inhaling the perfumed smoke of his narghileh, "such a show you haf never see."

At that moment the door opened for the third time, and a figure appeared—a figure dressed in a black bag, as it were, and a hood of somber cowl, with the ghastly, eye-piercing mask of white worn by the women of olden Cairo.

Close behind her followed the young Nubian, turbaned and robed in brown, blue, violet and crimson, and carrying an ornamented lute, tasseled and raying with precious stones; and when she paused on the rug of golden fringe, he lingered gravely at the outer edge, where he placed for himself a tri-colored hassock.

"Furies of thunder!" blurted Coco Vargas, "what is this?—some withered old hen you would pass off under such a disguise? Kick her out!"

her out! Do you take me for an ass? I'll have your life for this trick, Jacob Ezrontis!" and clenching his fists with a hiss and a snarl, he stepped quick and menacing toward the Jew.

"Stay, my good Vargas; you haf not see her yet," said the Jew, raising a hand to ward the blow of the poised fist. "You make too much haste. Presently you will think different."

As Jacob Ezrontis spoke, he made a sign to the Nubian, who, with a lightning movement, tore off the baggy dress and ghost-like mask worn by the figure, and tossed them out of sight.

"Dios! Look at that!" gasped the Spaniard, involuntarily.

He staggered back a pace, surprised, transfixed, thrilled to the soul.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 237.)



THIS TIME A YEAR.

BY R. T. KENNEDY.

Last June, a band of maidens free
Were floating down a starlit stream;
Fair Rene, midst all their joyous gleam,
Alone sat silent, in a waking dream.

The mountains echoed back their song,
And echoed back their laughing jest;
And as in manifold the echoes throng,
They laughed aloud with greater zest.

With silent mien and bended head,
And eyes upon the water clear,
Rene sat, mid jest, then sudden said:
"Where will we be this time a year?"

The year has flown; and of that band
Fair Rene we number with the dead;
Gay Rene has gone to distant land,
And Kate and May are happy wed.

Saline has wooed the muses' power,
With witty word and mighty pen;
And Bertie fair, with beauty's dower,
Is still as free as she was then.

And now when sailing silently
O'er starlit streamlet rippling clear,
Remember then, they must, their gleam,
When floating here this time a year.

Pretty Mrs. Gordon.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

NETTIE and I are orphan girls, and our home is a pretty place on the banks of the Delaware, not far from Philadelphia. We are not so young as we once were, for I am twenty-seven and Nettie was twenty-three last summer, but we are not too old to enjoy life, nor too young to live as we have since our father's death, alone with one servant.

If you like, you may call us old maids, but—well—there is a wealthy young farmer—and a thorough gentleman he is, too—who comes to see Nettie very regular, and as to myself, there is an operator in one of the telegraph offices up in the city, whose name is Harry Saunders, and one of these days, if we live, my name will be Saunders too. Of course I think him a noble fellow—as indeed he is—and that will do for us, I think. Except that I will say, though I am only quiet Jenny Glover, with the most moderate share of beauty, I don't fear one of the pretty city belles he meets every day, for not one of them can win my Harry away.

Well—if I'm going to tell my little story without being tedious—our home is such a pretty place that every summer city people come out and apply for board. We have never taken them till this summer, but it has been very hard times, you know, and Nettie wants a new piano—a Steinway—very much; so I told her we would take two or three ladies this summer, and she should have the money for her piano.

First came an elderly lady and her daughter—Mrs. Stokes and Miss Josie—very wealthy city people, who wanted a quiet rest, because Mrs. Stokes was in too poor health to go among the bustle and confusion of a stylish watering-place.

They were excellent people, too wealthy and well-bred to be proud and haughty, coming of pure old Quaker stock, and we soon grew to love them very much. Jessie Stokes and sister Nettie were warm friends in a few days, and we thought we would not take any one else to disturb the pleasure of our happy summer.

We refused a number of applications. But one morning a lovely little lady came down from the city, saying she was a stranger, living in Washington, kept in or near Philadelphia all summer by business relating to some city property. She couldn't bear to stay in the city through the hot weather, and having noticed our pretty home as she was riding by, she begged of us to take her in a while.

She showed us recommendations addressed to the city lawyers who had charge of her business, from men in Washington whose names were known even to quiet people like us, and she pleaded so winningly to become one of us, that our hearts melted.

We held a consultation with Mrs. Stokes, and even she could see no objection to a lady who came so well recommended, and who would be such a charming addition to a social circle.

We agreed to take her, and, highly pleased, Mrs. Gordon—so she gave us her name—went back to the city, to return, bag and baggage, by the four o'clock train. We sent our own light wagon up to bring her from the depot, and on the ride she fairly charmed our honest tenant-farmer, who acted as driver, so that he said to me, as he carried in her trunk, that "that was the nicest, prettiest, sociablest little creature he ever did see."

She charmed the rest of us as well as farmer Bennett, with her winning ways and dainty dresses, and in a week's time nobody called her anything but pretty Mrs. Gordon, except when they spoke to herself.

She won Nettie's heart completely by her wonderful music. The old piano rung like silver bells under her white fingers, and such singing is seldom heard of the best stage.

She delighted old Mrs. Stokes and Miss Josie too, by her thoughtful attention to the invalid's comfort. In short, she was the pet and plaything of the whole circle, from Nettie and I down to our maid Barbara. I never saw any person who had so entirely the power of fascinating others as pretty Mrs. Gordon.

She had been there about a month, I think, when the first shadow of trouble came. She told us she was not very wealthy, but had means to live in comfort, and a prospect of more when the city business was settled. She paid her board bills promptly, and appeared always to have plenty of money, so we had no reason to doubt her statement.

Well, I said a shadow of trouble came. One morning Mrs. Stokes and Josie came down looking very serious, and announced the loss

of a valuable set of jewelry, pin, ear-rings and bracelets, set with garnets, belonging to Miss Josie. Josie said when she came down to supper the evening before, she had left them in their case lying on the bureau. When she went up again they were not there, but supposing her mother had put them away she said nothing. In the morning, happening to think of them, she asked Mrs. Stokes where they were, and the loss was discovered.

We were all surprised and alarmed. Nettie and I very much distressed, as nothing of the kind had ever occurred to us before. We could not suspect old Barbara—as well suspect ourselves, and how would any one else have got into the room? No search through the house, and no inquiry, threw any light on the subject, and we were in a state of agitation all day.

At night Harry came down from the city, and pretty Mrs. Gordon was the first one to tell him of our loss. Much discussion ensued, and at last we all adopted Harry's view, that some robber had entered the front hall, gone up-stairs and taken the jewel-case while we were at supper, and it was only a mercy he had not robbed every room up-stairs.

Mrs. Stokes offered a reward for their return through the city papers, and then we tacitly agreed, except in mind, to drop the unpleasant subject.

But that was not the end of trouble. In a few days Nettie came to me with a pale face, and told me that her gold watch and chain had disappeared. I was much alarmed, but I cautioned her not to say a word to the boarders, and we might get a clue some how.

At dinner that very day Mrs. Gordon told us that a costly ring had been taken from her table.

"Then there was a robber about last night," cried Mrs. Stokes. "I was almost sure, Mrs. Gordon, that I heard some one moving about in your room, and I was going to alarm the house, but when I sat up to listen I heard no more, so I thought I must have been mistaken."

"Oh, mercy!" screamed Mrs. Gordon, turning pale; "a robber in my room! I should have died with fright! And not a man about the house!"

"I wish I knew what to do," said I.

"Do have your farmer to sleep up here nights," said Mrs. Stokes.

"Oh, yes, do!" cried Mrs. Gordon. "This is such a lovely place, and I like you all so much, I hate to go away. But indeed I shall be afraid to stay longer than this week without some man in the house."

"I have to go to the city for some things this afternoon," said I, as I rose, faint and sick from the table; "but when I come back I'll see farmer Bennett and get him to stay here to-night."

As I went up to my room Mrs. Gordon asked me to get a piece of lace for her at Sharpless', and having promised, I hastily dressed for a trip to town.

Now I had not mentioned my real business in the city to any one. But it was to deposit in a city bank the money I had received from our boarders, and was saving for Nettie's piano. It amounted to nearly two hundred dollars, and I began to see the folly and danger of keeping it in the house.

I dressed hurriedly, fearing to miss the train, then unlocked the drawer where I kept the money, and put in my hand to take up the pocket-book in which I had placed it. Money and purse were both gone!

Deadly sick and faint, I dropped into a chair, trying to realize my loss! Not only Nettie's disappointment but the horror in the house chilled my very heart.

There was no use looking for it. It had lain in that spot when I locked the drawer the night before, and the key had been in my pocket ever since!

Well, I could do nothing but go to town and see Harry and ask him what to do. Meantime I would let no one know. I lathered my face, and rubbed my cheeks and lips well to restore the frightened-away color, and then I went out into the hall.

Remembering pretty Mrs. Gordon's request, I tapped at her door. It was a crack open, and at my tap it swung further back, so that I caught a glimpse of her bending over a little basket of jewels. But the case was instantly shut, locked and key in her hand, as she turned to me with a nervous little laugh, saying:

"Come in. I was only looking over my jewelry to see if I missed anything but the ring."

"And did you?" I asked, quite steadily.

"No, not a thing," she said, with another nervous little laugh. Then she gave me her directions about the lace, and I went mechanically, yet steadily down-stairs and out of the house, walked rapidly to the station, and never dared think once, till I sunk into my seat in the train, and had time to recover my self-possession.

For I had made an awful discovery. Hastily as pretty Mrs. Gordon snapped that casket shut, I had a glimpse of a golden chain which I could almost swear was Nettie's!

It was an awful suspicion, but I could not control or keep it back. And the more I thought of it, the more certain I was that it was Nettie's chain. I remembered her nervousness—I recalled her pallor at the table—I thought of several little things unnoticed before.

And all I could conclude on was to go to Harry and ask his help. Fast as the train flew it seemed to me to creep, and when we reached the river the ferry-boat did not seem to move at all.

I sprang into a street-car because my feet could not fly fast enough, and in five minutes I was in Harry's office. He saw by my face that something was wrong, and led me at once into his private office and seated me in a comfortable chair.

"Now, little one, what is it?" he asked.

And rapidly as I could I told my story from first to last.

"Great God!" was Harry's solemn exclamation, as I ended. He sat a few moments in deep thought. Then suddenly looking up, he asked: "Did you say one of her letters was from Senator B—?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Come, I cried he, springing up. I followed him into the outer office, and in ten seconds a message was flying over the wires to Senator B—

It seemed an age—it was but half an hour before this flew back:

"Never gave such a letter. Never knew such a person. Am positive Senator B— never did either. You are being imposed on—better be careful."

Harry looked at me. I answered his gaze as silently.

"Well!" I said, as soon as I could find breath.

"You go right home," said Harry, "and watch her closely. Don't let your manner excite any suspicion, but tell them carelessly that I am coming down in the six o'clock train. I'll come, and bring an officer with me. Go now."

So I hastened home, only stopping to procure Mrs. Gordon's lace. I mentioned very carelessly, to Nettie, in presence of the others, that she might tell Barbara to delay supper half an hour, as Harry would be down by the six o'clock express.

Mrs. Gordon gave me a sharp glance, but my face told no secrets, so she was satisfied.

I threw myself on the sofa, and declaring I was very tired, begged her to play till I got rested.

She sat down to the piano, and played a good many things, while I seemed deeply interested.

At the sound of footsteps she rose, just as Harry and a gentleman in black clothes entered.

Before a word could be said, this gentleman caught Mrs. Gordon's arm, saying, "Excuse me, madam, but you are my prisoner."

She turned white as death, but started back, exclaiming quickly, "What poor joke is this? Who are you, sir?"

"Without a word he threw back his black coat and pointed to the officer's badge upon his vest, and with a low cry, pretty Mrs. Gordon fell, fainting. Placing her upon a sofa, he snapped a pair of handcuffs over her delicate wrists, and felt in her pocket.

Drawing out a bunch of keys, we all followed him up-stairs. The casket had disappeared, but upon opening her trunk, it was found. And when it was opened, lo! Josie's jewels, Nettie's watch and chain, and a number of other articles, owners unknown. In her trunk we found my money, and several more articles of jewelry.

When we went down-stairs, pretty Mrs. Gordon was just recovering her senses. Very soon after, the officer took her away, while Harry remained with us.

We missed nothing more that summer. The Stokes' stayed with us late in the season. They were delightful people, but I don't think we will ever take any more summer boarders. Especially since before another summer I shall live in the city myself, with Harry, and Nettie and her husband will occupy our home.

THE LAST TRYST.

Over brown moors and withered leas
The angry winds were sweeping;
Over the great gray northern seas
The crested waves were leaping.
And you and I stood close together,
In the chilling gleam of the wintry weather,
As the bare, gaunt branches, overhead,
Shook their lingering leaflets, gold and red,
While in every faltering word we said
Long the painful wait for the days that were dead;
For, by the sad seas, 'neath the storm-beat trees,
Our last tryst we were keeping.

I scarce could hear the words you sobbed
Amid your passionate weeping,
And the glow from my eager prayer was robbed
By the chill around us ereeping;
From the silent paths, where in summer weather,
Youth, joy and music had met together,
From the cry of the sea-mews flitting blast,
O'er the wild white waves in the bitter blast,
From the breakers that crashed on the hollow sand,
From the sigh of the breeze o'er the dull dry land,
From sea and shore rose, "No more, no more,
As our last tryst we were keeping."
There was not a pale bud left, in sooth,
Mid the dry leaves round us heaping;
The bitter harvest of reckless youth,
Time's iron hand was reaping;
Our lips still said, "Forever, forever,"
As the trembling fingers clung together,
But even then each sad heart knew
What fate and circumstance meant to do,
And the mighty billows boomed like a knell,
As we turned apart from that long farewell,
And to wind, and rain, and the moaning main,
Left the last tryst of our keeping.

The Letter-Box.

MARY A. H. (Stamford) writes:
Suppose a lady and gentleman, strangers to each other, visiting at the same house. Existing circumstances prevent the lady visitor and her hostess from retiring until the gentleman has been shown his room. He would not be rude to the lady to constantly remark upon the lateness of the hour, that she was very sleepy, etc., as long as the gentleman had made no move to retire nor the host to show the visitor his room?"

Certainly. It would be direct rudeness, not only to the gentleman but to the host and hostess. In such a case the lady should consult the convenience and wishes of the others, and restrain her personal inclinations.

ONE OF THE THREE writes:
Three young ladies, one a member of the household, the others visitors, were left alone an evening by their host and hostess. A caller came, an old friend of the family. His call was upon no particular person. The young lady of the house and one of the visitors made little effort to entertain him, and soon retired. The other lady maintained that they were selfish and rude, both of which imputations they deny. Please settle the case."

They were selfish to inflict duties and company upon their companion of which they gladly rid themselves. They were also rude—toward the gentleman especially—impudently so, toward the gentleman and rude also toward the master and mistress of the house, whose place they should have filled to their friends.

POSTMASTER SAYS:
He visited a young lady residing with her sister, and seeing an album, asked if it was hers. She replied, "It is my sister's," and did not notice his intimation that he would like to see it. He asked: "Was it wrong to make the remark? Was her answer intended to inform me my company was not agreeable? They seem to welcome me at succeeding calls—is this simply out

FAREWELL TO THE FLOWERS.

Dear children of the garden, field and wood
And wayside, ye have come and ye have gone,
Like players in some merry interlude,
Between the tragic acts of winter; on
In gay procession o'er a brilliant zone
Ye've traveled, holding up before the eye
The shape of perfect beauty, and the tone
Of that harmonious coloring which we try
In vain to equal, or indeed come nigh.

Sweet was the honey which ye gave the bees,
Industrious sippers of your golden cellar;
Rich was the fragrance which ye gave the breeze,
As he ran ringing all along your bells;
Glad were ye when the rain from cloudy wells
Sparkled upon your petals, and the sun
Like one who in the blessed heaven dwells,
Came down and fondly kissed you every one,
And every day until your course was run.

Like one bereaved, upon your graves I gaze,
Mourning your absence with unfeigned grief;
Remembrance paints me all your pretty ways,
In your fine progress from your first green leaf.
Until ye stood up like an autumn sheaf
In mellow splendor. Oh, ye fairy things!
Why should ye go down like a sunken reef?
Why like the swallows ply your farewell wings,
And cause the desolation which your absence brings?

Thou Snow-drop, rival of the taintless snow;
Thou Crocus, symbol of the monarch's crown;
Thou Primrose, shiner in a golden show
While the glittered richly all the green bank down;
Thou Daisy, wearer of the bridal gown;
Thou Lily, lady of the ancient Hall;
Thou Poppy, soldier in thy red renown;
Thou Rose, the queen of sorrow and the wall,
How have ye all gone down under the spoiler's pall?

Farewell! companions of the singing bills,
Of the green grass, and of the yellow crop;
Ye friends of rivers and of daisy fields;
Ye watchers on the lofty mountain's top;
Ye worshippers beneath the crystal cope,
And in the flaming, shining, solar face;
Farewell, farewell, in sorrow and in hope;
Our hearts will linger on in daily pain,
Until we see your happy looks again.

Lance and Lasso:

THE CHILDREN OF THE CHACO.

BY CAPT. FREDERICK WHITTAKER,
AUTHOR OF "THE JAGUAR CAPTAIN," "THE SEA CAT,"
"THE ROCK RIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.
THE WARNING.

The Indians did not seem to be perfectly certain of the position of our friends, for they came galloping past the edge of the breastwork, within fifty feet, all gathered in a dense body and perfectly exposed.

Just as they reached the center of the little fortification a loud voice shouted a warning, and the whole body shrank off in confusion.

The revolver of Captain Hernandez cracked, and a close and well-delivered volley of rifles followed, the bullets tearing their way through the dark mass of men and horses with fearful effect.

As if stricken with a perfect panic, the survivors fled like the wind, leaving dead and dying horses and men by the dozens behind them.

Their numbers seemed to be much increased, as could be seen even in the dark, from those who had attacked in the morning.

"Some other tribe has joined them," said Captain Hernandez, as he looked at the retreating mob. "There are at least six hundred warriors there. Hal! we've no time to lose. I thought they wouldn't stay behind. Here they come again! Load up and keep cool."

Sure enough, the dark mass on the pampa was agitated by a tumultuous movement, and in a very few minutes down came the whole body with a fierce yell, in one of their resolute charges.

The earth trembled beneath the thunder of hoofs; a front of glaring eyes and tossing manes became visible in the moonlight, while dark, weird figures crouched above, and a forest of lance-points glittered before the horses' heads. Like a vision of the night the strange spectacle burst on the sight, while one shrill, gathering yell rose higher and higher above the thundering of feet and the snorting of the steeds.

Then, with a tremendous shock, the Indian horsemen crashed through the fringe of palms that hid the breastwork, and came dashing up to the very foot of the breastwork.

Even as they came, a second volley was fired, but they did not seem even to notice it, except by a fiercer yell.

Then there was a shock and crash, as the horses blundered into the abattis, plunging wildly about up to the very barrier, their savage riders thrusting their spears over the bulwark, and raising their horses to leap.

But, just as with the rope before, so now with the log, the singular anomaly was presented of perfect horsemen utterly unable to leap, and horses that seemed to be spellbound before a four-foot barrier. Many of the wild steeds, entangled in the prickly abattis and plunging to get out, reared themselves up high enough to have leaped the barrier again and again, but they never seemed to think of doing it, and the shots of the revolvers that now rattled about their ears so incessantly soon settled the question.

Fierce and desperate as were the Indians, the rain of death was too severe, and they fell back at last, leaving twenty dead bodies and a number of badly wounded men and horses.

As they galloped off, Captain Hernandez observed:

"We are safe for to-night. Let us make our fires and go to sleep. They will not attack again before daylight."

The captain proved to be right. There were but three or four hours remaining till morning, but these were passed in perfect quiet.

They could see the Indians lighting fires up on the pampa, and, as in the evening before, the fires were three in number. When the day broke three black columns of smoke were seen ascending into the air, and the effect was quickly apparent.

Even as the sun rose, they could see little strings of horsemen emerging from the distant woods, and making their way toward the fires.

It was plain that the latter were signals, and that the whole of the tribes of the Chaco were assembling to punish the intruders on their soil.

Don Luis began to look much troubled as he scanned the increasing forces of the savages. The forty-seven men on whom they could depend had been reduced by three more in the last night's assault, having been speared as they stood behind the barricade by those Indians who had blundered through the abattis.

The dead bodies of the enemy were out of all proportion to those of the whites, but the latter could less afford their losses, however small.

Captain Hernandez was the first to utter words of encouragement as the daylight came. The brave officer was as cool as a cucumber, and his soldiers were equally at their ease, to all appearance.

"Cheer up, lads," he said, laughingly. "Had we stayed with the wagons, we should be ten times worse off than we are, for there would be no means of escape and nothing to eat. As it is, the river lies behind us, full of

fish; we are intrenched so strongly that all the Indians on the Chaco cannot dislodge us; and we have plenty of ammunition for a long fight."

"In my opinion," said Don Luis, in a low tone, "we shall be kept here for weeks, unless we find a way to give those devils the slip. I see no earthly way to do it, either."

"Never fear," said the dragon, boldly. "I shall try the effect of a vigorous defense first, and if that does not answer, why, we must even make a raft and float ourselves down the river. If we cross, we shall be comparatively out of danger. The other bank is free of foes."

"How long will it be so?" asked the estanciero, gloomily. "They can swim the stream on their horses without much trouble."

"At all events," said the captain, impatiently, "it's no use to borrow trouble. We are safe where we are, and those fellows are pretty well disgusted with their losses. Let us go to breakfast. We shall all fight better on full stomachs."

The matter-of-fact soldiers were already employed in preparing the morning meal, as coolly as if no enemy were near them. The fish in the river were so plentiful and voracious that ten minutes sufficed to catch enough for the whole party, and they were soon broiling on the coals.

The boys, young and light-hearted as they were, easily caught the infection of Hernandez's cheerful spirit, and Manuel Garcia was the only one who looked serious. He knew the real danger as well as his father, for Manuel had heard terrible tales of the reckless daring and implacable revenge of the Chaco Indians.

While they were eating their breakfast, the Indians were slowly assembling, till a cloud of mounted warriors, at least a thousand strong, were gathered together in the distance.

Then there was a movement in the mass, and four glittering figures rode out from the throng, and came galloping toward the bulwark that surrounded our party.

"A flag of truce," said the captain, as he watched them. "That's a point in our favor. If they chose to attack, we should be badly off, for they might break in at some point, and then where would be our chances?"

Tom Bullard, who said nothing, as usual, went to the bulwark and looked at the four advancing cavaliers. The gold ornaments that glistened on their bodies told that their rank must be that of caciques, for no one but the elders wore any sort of jewels.

As they came closer, he recognized the white locks of old Nabadagua, whose left arm was bound up in a sling. By his side rode two other old men, each a perfect counterpart of the old cacique, tall, erect, and still muscular and powerful, while their abundant hair was snow-white.

The fourth member of the party was no other than the Princess Maimora, mounted on a piebald steed, that Tom recognized as belonging to Nagua, the war-chief.

As they came nearer, it was observed that all were unarmed, while the princess carried a green palm branch, which she waved as she came, in token of amity.

"Senorito," said Captain Hernandez to Tom, "you have already done so much for us that I cannot ask you to do more; still I wish that you would meet those people and ask what they want. You know their language. Sergeant Gonzalez shall go with you."

"All right, Cap," said "Plug," curtly. He leaped on his horse, put the animal at the barrier, and leaped him over with an ease that showed that the pampas horses only needed a little training to become perfect leapers.

Then the Paraguayan sergeant followed by a gap that was left for the purpose, and both walked their horses out of the wood to meet the envoys.

Tom and Gonzalez each carried a revolver in his hand, for the tales of Indian treachery were too fresh in the minds of each to trust to the seeming absence of weapons among the old caciques.

When the latter were about fifty feet off, "Plug" presented his pistol, and shouted:

"Halt! Walk your horses, or I'll fire!"

The Indians, with one accord, curbed their foaming steeds, and advanced at a foot-pace to where Tom awaited them.

"Keep your revolver ready, senorito," muttered Sergeant Gonzalez. "I don't trust those devils. I've known them to throw knives before this."

Tom took the hint.

"Halt; you're near enough," he said. "What do you want?"

The three caciques halted, and each raised his hand to his head in a gesture of high-toned courtesy. Old Nabadagua muttered a few words to the rest, and it was evident that they all recognized and admired Tom.

"My son is very brave for one so young," said Nabadagua. "Thrice has he foiled our best warriors. He is braver than all the rest of the white men. As for them, they are cowardly capinchas, that flee to the water; but my son is a Jaguar that faces his prey and tears it."

Tom bowed his head.

"What do you want, then?" he repeated.

The lad was certain that the adroit flattery of the old chief covered some ulterior design, and he was not going to fall into a trap.

"I want my son," said the old man, gravely. "He was well treated with the Abipones; no cord shackled his limbs. We gave him a horse to ride. He was to wed the youngest daughter of Nabadagua, a maiden whom all the warriors toiled after in vain. Why has my son left the children of the Chaco, whose horse-hoofs are terrible in the ears of the whites? While he was with us, he was a man. Now he has joined himself to the cowardly whites, whose fire-weapons slay from afar, who hide behind logs; and who fear to meet the lance of a naked warrior, because their hearts are small. Come back to us, and let us exterminate the whites; then shall my son be king of the Chaco."

"Is that all?" asked Tom, quietly.

"Not all. My son must give up the horses he has taken from us."

"And what if we do this?" asked the boy.

"Can my companions go free?"

"Not so," said Nabadagua, gravely. "They are in our power, and their lives are ours. Still, we will give them their lives, if they will give up their weapons and horses."

"Then we may as well stop talking," said Tom. "If you want our horses and weapons, you must come and take them. Good-by."

As he spoke, he waved his revolver with a gesture of dismissal, but the chief did not stir.

"My son will think better of this," he said. "We will give the whites till sunset to decide. When the sun touches the mountains it will be too late. Even my son's life will be forfeit. Beware."

He quietly turned his horse away, and was followed by the three caciques. Maimora impudently approached Tom, and looked earnestly at him.

"Why will the Jaguar-heart refuse?" she said, pleadingly. "We have forgiven him all, and spared his friends for his sake. To-night mercy is at an end."

"Look at those breastworks, and tell me if we need ask for mercy yet," said the lad, proudly.

"You will see when it is too late," she said. "You made this discovery ever since he had remarked the looks of the moonlah."

Without exactly knowing the secret, he suspected him to be very different from what he seemed.

Ashurst had given him a hint to that extent. However this might be, it was evident that he was devoting himself, heart and soul, to the cause of the three girls, and not without hope of reward.

His very soul burned within him with hate and jealousy.

Some desperate scheme was in his head, one which appeared to crowd upon his brain with such intensity as to age him, as he thought.

Men talk of the hair turning white in a single night—what must be the effect on the brain of such intense and awful suffering?

"Amli," continued the captain, after a while, showing him a small purse, "do you wish to earn that money?"

The man's eyes dilated with pleasure.

"How can I do it?" he asked.

"I must procure admission to yonder castle," was the startling reply.

"But, oh, ginour! it would be certain death."

"I mean to risk it."

"How?"

"Look! yonder come a man and woman with a donkey. Could you not induce them to lend us their animal, and enter the palace in disguise?"

"Allah kerim!" cried the amazed domestic, "my master is surely mad."

"I am not," said the captain, sternly, as he pressed the purse into the hand of the other.

The gold was too much for him. He could not resist the temptation.

Calling to the couple of villagers, who wore the flowing robes of Arabs of the desert, he drew them on one side with their beast of burden, into the thicket.

The captain, with a dark and gloomy brow, looked on while his servant was chaffering.

The Arabs listened with amazed incredulity, but presently Amli turned round and said they would part with the donkey, eggs, and vegetables, for three gold tomanes, loaning their clothes at the same time.

Now in the desert the women are in the habit of wearing untanned high boots of the shape and size once so popular in this country as "Wellingtons."

The captain had a similar pair, and being a slight, elegant man of middle height, it was easy for him to hide his dress under the wide, waving cloak, and his face under the capacious hood.

He had only to play a very modest part to fear no discovery.

None would venture to peep beneath the hood of a married woman in presence of her husband.

The bargain was therefore struck, and, further, the natives agreed to await their return in the copse.

The payment in advance was very liberal, and the captain promised further reward if they were faithful.

"I shall not speak a word," said the captain.

"On your head be it," replied Amli, who looked rather rueful; "suspicion would be death."

"I know it. Fear not, oh, Amli, I will act with circumspection and care," was the answer.

Which, considering he had adventured on one of the most daring and foolish of expeditions, was saying a great deal.

The donkey, loaded with provisions, was now driven up the incline toward the castle. Evidently the visit was expected, for when they reached the palace, the gates were open, and they were admitted without difficulty.

Several other chapmen were coming up behind.

Amli placed his donkey in a corner, under the charge of his supposed wife, and then proceeded to make the best show he could of his wares in the middle of the road, where he was speedily joined by the purveyors of the harem.

As other dealers entered, the talking and chaffering became loud and lively.

The captain looked around.

He was seated at the entrance of a vaulted passage leading into the interior of the habitation.

He was desperate.

No matter at what cost or risk, he would see and speak with Edith.

Daring up the passage, which was deserted, he found that it led to the foot of a deserted staircase, slippery, and cut in the thick wall of the fortress.

It was gloomy and dark.

Not a moment was to be lost, for discovery was certain death.

Clambering up the apparently long-deserted steps, the captain found it long and arduous.

At length, however, some loopholes admitted light.

Peeping through one of these, he found himself on a level with the harem private garden.

But several more steps had to be ascended. He went up, and soon found himself in a kind of cage with four windows, on the summit of a lofty tower, the watch-tower of the fortress. He peered over. He was about ten feet above the terrace of the ramparts, and the same above the garden of the zenana.

No one was about.

With the luxurious habits of the Eastern convents, this was natural.

But what was he to do?

To enter the sacred precincts would be an act of supreme folly, of utter madness.

And yet he knew that at any moment he might be surprised.

He looked round for a place of concealment.

Then he noticed a small staircase on the outside of the tower, covered in, which communicated with the garden below.

Near this was a small, alcove-like opening, with some lumber.

In case of surprise, this was the only retreat which offered itself.

With a dark and moody brow the young man seated himself where he could look out upon the scene below.

He was armed with dagger and pistol, and earnestly determined to sell his life dearly if discovered.

Presently, after he had been seated some time, he heard a stir in the garden, which was separated by a wall from the terrace of the embattlements, and looking over, saw what would have caused him a hundred cruel deaths, if man's ingenuity could have contrived it.

The empress and her ladies, in all the freedom and abandon of the morning, taking a lazy stroll before going to the bath.

But though he gazed with fierce, hot, glaring eyes, he saw not those he was in search of, and resumed his listless attitude.

Presently, however, the veranda of the terrace was filled, and he saw Mrs. Bacon come forth, followed by the three girls and one of the attendants of the harem.

flirting in a garrison town—but he discovered that the beautiful girl had entwined herself so firmly round his heart as to menace it with fracture if he sought to eradicate it.

He had made this discovery ever since he had remarked the looks of the moonlah.

Without exactly knowing the secret, he suspected him to be very different from what he seemed.

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The Moor-Captives:

THE ADVENTURES OF THREE YOUNG LADIES.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DARING PROJECT.

It was indeed Lionel and his two friends who had ventured so near to the summer palace, and placed themselves in a position where, if discovered, they would have suffered certain death.

A circle round the castle was marked as the limit of all trespassers, and any found near, were adjudged as having violated the laws of the empire.

The young men, disguised as Arabs of the desert, and mounted on splendid Arab steeds, had followed the cavalcade, and camped in a cavern on the hillside, leaving a native servant to take care of the animals.

The moonlah, who had returned to the city, by order of his imperial master, directly after escorting the empress-mother

His glance sought Edith greedily, and with an earnest and impassioned gaze. She was sad and thoughtful, but, oh, he thought, how supremely lovely. What would he have given to speak? But it would have been insensate madness to have tried the experiment just then. The native woman took some orders and then retired.

The captain could no longer contain himself. He glanced down at the garden.

None were looking his way. Advancing to a loophole which overlooked the garden of the embattlement, he cried: "Miss Edith!"

She was standing nearer to him than the others were, and heard without recognizing the voice.

"Who calls?" she gasped, with a terrified and startled look.

"Do you not know my voice?" exclaimed the speaker, with something like a pang, "that of your devoted friend—Captain Thomson?"

"Heaven! what means this? where have you concealed yourself?" whispered Edith. The captain waved his hand through the loophole.

"Who are you talking to, Edith?" said Mrs. Bacon.

Edith explained.

"Brave and gallant soldier," cried the worthy woman, "are you here to save us?"

"Or die," was the answer.

"Can you give us any hope?" she asked.

But no answer came, though they thought they heard a strange and muffled sound.

"Something must have happened," cried Edith.

"They have discovered him," said Mrs. Bacon.

Again strange and gurgling sounds fell on their ears, which, however, they were unable to make out what they could possibly mean.

But soon they heard a low groan.

With wildly beating hearts they waited an explanation.

This is what had happened.

While the captain was speaking with Edith, he heard a low, cautious step ascending the side steps of the tower.

There was no time for retreat.

He stood erect and firm, but with his hood drawn over his head, so as only to admit of his just peering out.

Next instant a negro slave peered in.

Seeing the burrows and boots of a woman, he approached, and made some demand in a guttural tone, at the same time making show as if to remove the hood.

Not an instant was to be lost.

The captain drew back his hood, revealing the unmistakable countenance of an infidel gignour.

"Wallah!" cried the astonished black, standing with open mouth, and arms falling by his side; "what dog of a yahoodi is this?"

He then would have turned to summon aid. But the captain had him by the throat.

He endeavored to cry out, but the grip of the English soldier was terrible.

He exerted a strength almost double he could have shown on ordinary occasions.

But the negro fought for dear life.

He threw out one of his feet, and with the dexterity of his race in single combat, succeeded in throwing the captain backward.

For one moment he was obliged to let the other go, but only for a moment.

The black made a frantic effort to scream, but the Englishman again clutched him, and the vain attempt ended in a gurgling sound.

The man was strong and desperate.

He saw clearly that his opponent meant death, and that one only could survive the struggle.

He had a yataghan in his belt.

Could he but get hold of this, he would soon dispatch the hated foe.

Fearful was the silent struggle.

The cloak had fallen off in the struggle, and left the captain's arms free.

He saw the negro's object, and strove more and more to render him insensible.

But the negro's left hand was round his throat, and holding him with the grip of a wild beast.

Like the wrestlers seeking to win a prize, they struggled, until at length both paused to gain breath.

They were panting and exhausted.

The captain relaxed his hold one moment.

The negro with a fearful bound rose to his feet, and made for the summit of the tower, where he could give the alarm.

The captain knew that if he reached it alive, all was lost.

With a gigantic effort he aroused himself, and sprang after him.

He could have plunged his dagger in his back, but he scorned the advantage.

As the negro reached the platform of the tower, the captain clutched his ankle and tripped him up.

Now began another and a terrible struggle.

The men had contrary objects.

The negro strove to drag his opponent to that side of the platform which overlooked the garden, where the desperate encounter must be seen.

Exactly the other way strove the captain.

At length the agility and endurance of the English soldier, with the superior skill, overcame the brute force of the black.

He was hurled against the edge of the tower toward the dry ditch.

Self-defense, the salvation of the girls, left the captain no choice.

He must kill or be killed.

The black was leaning over the wall, his eyes were dilated, he felt himself yielding rapidly, and strove, as a last resource, to shriek.

"Die, dog of a black!" said the officer, sternly, and hurled him over the battlements.

"Poor fellow," he added, "he only did his duty after all."

And, with a sickening shudder, he looked over and saw him lying crouched and quiet on the stones below.

His death had probably been instantaneous.

The last desperate struggle had been witnessed by the girls with fearful and agonizing interest.

Gently nurtured, amiable and good, the scene was terrible in the extreme.

All closed their eyes at the finish, and could scarcely obey the summons of Mrs. Bacon to re-enter their quarters, where some attendants had summoned them to the bath.

The captain wiped the cold, clammy perspiration off his brow, and descended slowly to his hiding-place.

Necessity had called for the deed the captain had committed.

Yet he could not help feeling regret for what he had done.

Doubtless the wretched black would be missed when a search would be made.

In this case discovery appeared impossible to be avoided, unless they believed the fall to be accidental.

But, be this as it may, he had no resource but to wait.

At the same time he had reason to believe the steps by which he had ascended from below safer than where he was.

They were evidently little used.

It was fortunate that no sooner did he conceive the idea than it was carried out.

Scarcely had he seated himself on a step in the dark and gloomy staircase when he heard voices above him, the horrid voices of the peculiar guard affected to the harem.

They were evidently rather merrily inclined.

Presently, however, they came rushing down, uttering hoarse and savage cries.

They had discovered the body of their comrade lying in the dry ditch below.

The captain shuddered at his fearful escape, and resigned himself to remain where he was until night fell upon the scene.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SLAVE-DEALER.

WHEN Suleiman enabled his accomplices to escape from the alcove in which they had been momentarily secreted, he lost no time in getting out of the palace of the empress-mother.

He was utterly confounded and much exasperated at the unexpected interference of the moolah.

He believed it to be part of a well-organized conspiracy to thwart his views.

But how they had been discovered it was impossible for him to say.

Nobody ever thought of suspecting the Armenian banker, for the simple reason that all knew him to be quite disinterested in the matter.

They little thought how much influence an inadvertent word sometimes has on the fortunes of individuals.

A well-known coffee-house stood in front of the imperial palace, and to this the three adjourned.

They saw by the small body of horse outside that some sudden departure was intended.

Smoking their chibouques, and sipping their coffee, they waited. Not for long.

The procession soon left the palace, and took its way toward the outer gate of the town.

"Some treachery has been at work," said the corsair, "or this sudden removal would not have taken place."

"Your moolah, or priest," said Sir Thomas, "appears to have a great deal of power."

"He is much trusted by the emperor."

"And yet he is a renegade, an apostate from his own religion and country," continued the baronet.

"The mantle of Mahommed covers all sins," said the corsair, coldly.

"I wish I had the accursed moolah, as you call him, in a quiet corner," hissed the earl; "I'd teach him to mix himself in my concerns."

"Hem—ahem!" coughed Sir Thomas; "then I would not be in his shoes."

"Why?" retorted the other.

"Because you looked rather ugly and vicious just then," said the baronet, gravely. "I am afraid you would make a very disagreeable foe."

"Tut, man, why talk nonsense when we have to consult as to our future proceedings—Ah, what is that?" he cried, as three horsemen swept by in the direction of the retreating cavalcade.

"The laggards of the escort, I presume," said the corsair; "but what is to be done now?"

"You have not earned your money yet," was the rather captious reply.

"I have not; but I am not going to risk my head. The taking away of the English maidens is a warning which you would do well to take," gravely answered the slave-dealer; "it is written that the girls shall outlive you."

"No. We will not give them up."

"Your lives are forfeit if you are even suspected," replied Suleiman.

"Suspected we are by that infernal moolah," cried the earl, "but that only makes me all the more resolved to thwart him."

"Allah kerim! obstinate men will have their way. I can easily find whither the girls have been removed; then, if you persevere in a foolish errand, it is not my fault. Wait; yonder at the gate is my old friend the purveyor of the household."

And he sent a messenger to ask him over to coffee and pipes.

The grave and reverend officer came over with a kind of rude alacrity intended as a protest against a servant of royalty being treated thus unceremoniously, and then on finding who it was, was graciously pleased to smile.

He it was who had admitted the forbidden visitor to the harem a couple of hours before.

After smoking for some time, the corsair spoke.

"Her highness has made a sudden departure," he said.

"Yes," replied the purveyor, with a fat chuckle, "rather unexpected."

"May I ask—may your shadow never be less—if you know where her highness has gone?"

"Well, Captain Suleiman," said the other, gravely, "you know we never speak of such things, but as you are an old friend, I do not mind saying that they have gone to the castle of Lobeah."

"Oh!" replied the corsair.

After this the conversation flagged, and finally the slave-dealer and his friends retired to the residence of the former.

Suleiman tried to dissuade his companions from moving in the matter any more.

"Kismet! it is destiny. What is to be will be," he said; "and the girls are provided for."

"Is it more difficult to release them from the summer garden than from the palace?" asked the earl.

"No, but it is worth while."

"We are the best judges of that," said Sir Thomas, rather acrimoniously; "we have been very liberal already, and if you aid us to liberate the maidens, no reward shall be too great."

Suleiman was avaricious above every thing, and like a war horse pricking up his ears at the scent of the battle afar off, so did he at the mention of money.

A long conversation ensued, and Suleiman proposed a plan of unparalleled audacity.

In the hills, at no great distance from the palace castle, lived a robber chief. He was a man of the utmost daring, and of fertile resources.

He pretended to be a quiet and innocent sheik, and as a rule carried on his depredations at a great distance.

He would disappear with his followers for several weeks at a time, and then come back mysteriously, very much the richer for his foray.

Now this robber chief, he felt confident would, for a liberal consideration, undertake to enter the summer palace in the dead of the night and carry off the English maidens.

He had some desperate followers upon whom

the blame would be cast, and who would, after the outrage, be compelled to leave the country.

Now came the question of money.

The greater part of the cash raised by the murderous forgeries of the earl had been disposed of.

But more must be found.

The slave-dealer suggested their obtaining a supply from a French banker, a kind of rival of the Armenian.

Of the great wealth of his friends, offered to introduce them.

Suleiman, who regarded the yacht as a proof "I can not draw for much," said Sir Thomas, when they were alone; and then he added, pettishly: "what can Sir Charles be up to?"

"Am I his keeper?" was the savage reply, "that you ask me so pointedly about him?"

"No, no!" cried Sir Thomas; "only his disappearance, under the circumstances, is so unfortunate and unaccountable that I dream of it."

"Dreamers and drivers!" muttered the earl, turning away fiercely.

"Murderers and forgers!" added Sir Thomas, rubbing his hands; "had you there. Ah! Earl of Ravensbourne—once we stand on the soil of a free country you shall pay me for all this!"

And meanwhile the earl had gone up to his room, once more shut himself in, and once more set to work to forge the name of the dead and murdered colonel.

He knew now that discovery must take place, but who would suppose that he, an earl on the noble roll of England's peers, would be guilty of such a crime?

They would rather think the dead man had overdrawn his balance and afterward committed suicide.

This was what he counted on.

Having consoled himself with this reflection, he pocketed the check, and started with the corsair Suleiman to visit the French banker.

Sir Thomas looked after him with a cold, sarcastic smile, from a secret coign of vantage.

The sooner you and I part," he said to himself, "the better. I knew you for an utterly unscrupulous man about town, but by Heaven! I never suspected you to be a forger, thief and assassin."

With which muttered observation he retired to his sitting-room, to reflect upon the course of events which were advancing with rapid strides.

While smoking his pipe and sipping his coffee, a thought, like a lightning-flash, forced itself upon his aching brain.

He turned pale with agitation. The idea was one fraught with incalculable consequences.

If the three girls never returned to England, and were reported dead, what would become of the money left them?

He was sole trustee to the estates, for Mrs. O'Byrne counted for nothing.

With no claimants for the money, no heirs being in existence, what easier than to transfer the whole of the vast sums into his own name?

The tempter even suggested that as probably the three girls would disappear for ever in the dreary solitudes of the harem, he might continue to put their names to the receipts, relieving himself from the liabilities of trusteeship.

A moment before, and he had bitterly accused the earl of being a forger. Now that he contemplated the same thing for his own advantage, the crime appeared to take another shape.

So does the cunning and subtlety of evil suggestions blind us to really stupendous enormities.

Already he found himself contemplating the loss of the three girls with wondrous equanimity.

Meanwhile the earl strode along the street in deep thought.

Hitherto all had gone well, but how long could he count on success continuing?

Unless he reached England at a given date, suspicion would be excited.

Once there, and backed up by Sir Thomas, he had only to have the money privately paid in to stop all inquiry.

Forged bills of exchange and checks were once no strangers to certain bankers.

They said nothing about them because they knew they would be paid.

But the earl counted on keeping the estates of the earldom, and winning the dowry of Edith Montague.

There are many sore slips between the cup and the lip.

The French banker was a slight little wiry man, who, in an insignificant office of poor appearance, carried on business with every European state.

Like most of his countrymen abroad, he was possessed of few scruples, and would buy and sell a slave without any hesitation.

He had on many occasions been brought in contact with the slave-dealer, Suleiman, and knew that, although a pirate in the most complete sense of the word, he was safe in all money transactions.

Introduced on such respectable authority, the earl easily obtained money for his forged bills and checks.

Thus provided he returned to the residence of the corsair, and made preparations for the journey to the hills.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 235.)

Gilbert, the Guide:

OR,

LOST IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY C. DUNNING CLARK,

AUTHOR OF "ROD AND RIFLE," "IN THE WILDERNESS," "CAMP AND CANOE," ETC.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RELIEF GUARD.

Two days after they left Helen in the cave at the side of the stream, there marched out of the camp of Wayne fifty brave foresters with Clinton Waterman and John Mack at their head, and Owasco and Gilbert scouting in front.

A strong-limbed, hardy, danger-daring race, such as had sprung up in the new world—men who loved to march and toil, who took it as their birthright, and did gallant deeds for glory's sake. Few of their names live except in old songs, and the almost forgotten legends of their day. Yet, that these men lived and toiled, endured privation and faced danger with unswerving zeal, the great States they built up remain to prove.

They marched on foot, for if they had taken to the river they must have had a hard and difficult pull up the rapids, and it was thought better to march by land. They left the river on their left and turned their faces to the north-west, to cross the stretch of country contained in the bend of the river.

The countenance of Clinton shone with enthusiasm, and a high and holy purpose. Since the day when Gilbert and Owasco had come

into the fort, bringing the news that Helen was safe, he had been a new man, and had given Wayne no peace until they were on the march. Gilbert saw the exaltation upon that young face, and smiled as he went on over the tangled path. He had done some good then. If his own fate must be a hard one; if he must go on, hopeless and alone, without a glimmer in his sky to betray the coming of a brighter morning, at least he could hope to see others blessed, and he vowed in his heart to do all he could to bring these two together, who had suffered so much for each other in these terrible days.

There had been no sign of the enemy since the coming of Clinton. Gilbert had an idea that Gandelion might have had something to do with the withdrawal of the Indians, who had been threatening the post for some time before.

"Gilbert, dear," whispered Pat O'Driscoll, who had smuggled himself into the command in a way only known to himself. "Dye think the rid devils w'd be pitchin' intil us soon?"

"Keep your tongue between your teeth, Handy Pat," said Gilbert. "I'd like to know how you got here, anyhow?"

"Dye see that?" roared Pat, thrusting out a ponderous brow. "Dye mind that bit av a fuit? I've got the mate til that, and a fine pair they'd be til walk an the wather. Whoo! Whillaloo! Murther! I'd like to see the man, big or little, great or small, that w'd take it an himself to drive me back!"

"Oh, I suppose you must go, but if you have any regard for your scalp and would like to keep it on your head, give your tongue a holiday and don't exercise your brogue too much. That's all I've got to say."

"Maybe it's fightin' wid me ye w'd be after?" said Pat. "Och, thin, but it's meself is always agreeable to that same. So pick out a bit av a kippin off the road, and come at me wunst."

"What's a kippin?" demanded Clinton, with a light laugh.

A kippin! Sure an' that's a bit av a stick, like this now, that ye see in me hand. Glory till the man that fatched an Irishman how to handle a shilleagh, for it's his national weapon. I'm goin' to bate the he'd av the man wid the big mouth, who calls himself Gilbert, the Guide."

"Nonsense," said Gilbert. "I don't mean to quarrel with you, for I rather like you. But, you must keep more quiet. Put down that stick, my lad; I warn you."

Pat was advancing upon Gilbert with this shilleagh in his hand, and a grin ominous of mischief upon his face. Gilbert wheeled suddenly, and as the Irishman made a leap at him, he shot out his long arm with lightning-like swiftness and caught him by the throat and wrist, wrenched the stick from his grasp, and then shook him as a ferrier shakes a rat. So suddenly was it done that Pat had no time to think before he found himself powerless in the iron grasp of the Guide.

"Let up," said Pat; "I'm bate."

"Do you promise to behave yourself?"

"Yis; to you?"

"All right; having learned this lesson, I will make a scout of you yet. You will load your rifle and stay by Owasco and myself, for I know you do not fear danger."

"The devil a bit!" said Pat.

From this hour, during their many dangers, these two men were constant friends. The respect which the Guide had impressed the Irishman with by his wonderful strength and agility, never left him through life, and Pat had no desire to feel himself in that iron grip again.

At night they camped in the deep woods beside a spring which bubbled up among the leaves. One of the men, in a jocular spirit, led the Irishman to take a drink, and he complied, but he instantly leaped to his feet, with a horrified expression on his face, holding his tongue in his hand and glaring at the man who had led him to drink, in an angry way. Then he began to spit like one troubled with a phlegm in his throat, and to look about for a stick.

"Now thin, Misher, I'm thinkin' ye w'd call that a nice thrick. Look ye; ye'll be after puttin' some comether on the wather. Phat did ye put intil it?"

"Not a thing," said the man.

"Don't thry to pull wool over the eyes of Handy Pat O'Driscoll!" roared the Irishman, in great ire.

man's spot when the tracks were faint. Suddenly he paused upon the brink of a deep pit, reaching far down into the bowels of the earth. A deep, dark, noisome place, from which a reeking damp mist rose, and spread about the cave from side to side. Stooping on the brink, the Guide listened, and every man held his breath, and they heard a low, murmuring sound, as of rushing water, far below.

"I don't know what to make of this place," said the Guide. "I've tried to study it out again and again, and have never succeeded. Whether it is a subterranean stream, or a waterfall, I can't say, but it is *water*, and it's *hot*, or else where does this hot steam come from?" "Don't stop to speculate on that, my dear Gilbert, but go on in the search. While we linger here, Darromed is bearing Helen further and further away from us. I beg you, if you have any regard for me, to push on at once, and help me to aid my darling," said Waterman.

"Impatient, like all boys," muttered the Guide. "I might have known it would be hard to check him, once he gets his head set on an object. Now listen to me, Clinton Waterman; am I to lead in this affair, or are you?"

"Of course I must leave it to you, helpless as I am in regard to this place," replied the young man, earnestly. "You should make some allowance for my feelings."

"As if I didn't do that," murmured the Guide. "As if I could shut my heart to the cry of sorrow from a human breast. The boy don't know me, or he wouldn't say that to me. He don't know that my hopes, lying stranded and withered on a desolate shore, show themselves to my heart like the bare ribs of shipwreck, wrecked in the long ago. There, don't think me hard on you, lad, for I don't mean to be. I know how hard it is to lose loved ones; I've lost them myself, and that makes me feel the more for you, my poor boy. I'll find your Helen, if she lives, and if she dies, I will so avenge her that the Wyandots shall tremble when the name of Gilbert, the Guide, is spoken of in their lodges. Come around me, you three, and swear by all we hold holy and dear, by our hopes of heaven, and a land of peace where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, that you will never turn back from the duty of seeking this child, or avenging her if slain, unless incapacitated by wounds."

"I swear," said Clinton, solemnly, "and I will be true and steadfast to keep this my vow."

"And so do I, Handy Pat O'Driscoll, county Antrim, and the devil rescue me the day I turn back like a coward from danger."

"I cannot swear," said Owasco, proudly; "but I give you the word of a man who never lied that I will not turn back, until the white maiden is free or avenged, or another Onondaga scalp hangs on the war-pole of a Wyandot lodge."

They joined hands, these four strong men, and an electric shock seemed to pass from arm to arm. Henceforth they were bound in a new tie, by their solemn vow. Danger lay before their path in the coming days, but they did not fear it; privations were their lot, and they shared them boldly; torture and great sorrow came upon them, but never despair; but they were faithful and true to each other in the days before them.

"Now for work!" said the Guide. "Our path is cut out for us and we must tread it unshrinking, even to the end of our weary road. Some of us may grow weary, and lie down to rest forever from the cares of the world, but the rest must keep on unshrinkingly, if our course takes us into the very heart of the Wyandot villages. Give me the torch, Owasco, for I must study the course of the chief from this point."

He took the torch and looked for the bloody marks. They were faint now, as if the wound had nearly ceased to bleed, and upon a rock near by they found some pieces of stained calico rags and buck-skin, which had evidently been used to staunch the wound.

"See this," said the Guide. "It says to me more plainly than words could that here the Indian put Helen down and bound up his wound. I should say that it was in the leg, and probably a flesh-wound, or he could not have gone on so long, bleeding in that way. Very likely he bound the girl while he attended to the wound."

But how did he cross the chasm? demanded Waterman. "I should say it is ten feet wide."

"He did not cross it at all, I think," replied Gilbert. "Remember that he was forced to carry the girl in his arms, for she is too high-spirited to go with him willingly. There must be some outlet from this point of which I know nothing, or else he tried back from this point to the opening we passed about a hundred yards above."

At this moment Owasco began to climb up to a sort of shelf which ran along the wall of the vaulted passage, about three feet from the floor. Something bright glittered in the light of the lamp, and picking it up, he passed it to his companion. Gilbert gave it silently into the hand of the young soldier, who pressed it to his lips with a joyful cry. It was a broad gold ring, with a single diamond set into a tablet upon the top.

"That belongs to Helen," he said, quickly—"a gift which I made her in happier days, when we were betrothed. Doubtless she managed to slip it from her finger, in the absence of anything else she could lay hold of, to guide us in following her."

The Guide sprang upon the shelf by the side of Owasco, and together they ran along the wall, striking upon the rocks as they passed along to see if any were loose. At last one trembled under a heavy blow from the hand of Owasco, and seizing it in both hands, he plucked it out, and revealed an opening beyond. The two men worked hard and soon cleared a passage through which they could make their way, but before they passed in Gilbert examined the bottom of the passage, and there, in the dust of centuries, they found the tracks of an Indian foot, pressed heavily into the debris, as if he had carried a weight.

"Didn't I tell you so?" cried the Guide. "He carried her so far, but he can't stand that long, for the girl will make a heavy load after a little while, light as she looks. Come on, you fellows."

He crawled into the low passage, closely followed by Owasco, the Irishman and Waterman. The place was very narrow, and yet the air was pure and fresh—a strange characteristic of these limestone caves. For some distance the fine debris was thick upon the stone floor and they could follow the tracks readily, but as the passage grew wider and higher the dust disappeared, until they again stood in a lofty room, like that in which they had left Helen, containing, if possible, more beautiful specimens from the hand of that wonderful architect and artist, Nature.

But the tracks had disappeared, and they could no longer follow in the way they had

done before. For some distance there was no passage, either to the right or left, but at last they came to a place where the road separated, and the object of their pursuit might have taken either course.

"Stay here until I return or call for you," commanded the Guide, dashing down the right-hand passage with a torch in his hand. "I won't be long in finding out if she went this way."

He hurried on without paying any attention to the entreaties of Pat that he might go, and was absent some ten minutes, when he returned, saying that the passage had come to an end, and she must have gone by the other. They hurried on to make up for the lost time, and soon decided by slight traces, observable only to the scouts, that Darromed had passed this way.

"Don't ask me how I know this," said Gilbert. "It's a part of my business to read the earth like a printed book, and I see in this bare rock, written as plainly as I care to read, that this is the road he took. This can't last much longer, either, for this path inclines upward and we are not far from the open air."

"It seems to me that we have traveled miles under the earth," said Clinton.

"Deed have we," said Pat. "Fifty av thim, and Irish miles at that, and thim's the longest miles we know anything about, being that St. Patrick measured thim in his coach."

"We have not gone half a mile in all," replied the Guide. "That is, if we measure in a direct line. The circuit we have made is nearer a mile, but it is hard to measure distance in a place like this."

"Don't thry to fool me now," exclaimed Pat. "Sure an' we've traveled fifty miles, and long ways at that."

"No more than I say," persisted the Guide. "I ought to know something of the distance, for a great part of the later years of my life, I have made use of such hiding-places as this."

"I suppose so; but look at this! As I live, here is another branch of the passage."

"And a good sign to go by," said the Guide, stooping at the entrance of the right-hand passage. "This girl certainly has her wits about her, for wherever she is likely to leave us at fault she has left a reminder. That looks like a trinket I have seen her wear upon her neck."

It was a small piece of amber, cut in the form of a Maltese cross, which Waterman at once identified as belonging to the lady, and it pleased him that she should be so thoughtful.

"Yes, yes," he said. "She trusts in us to follow and save her, but she does not know how close we are upon the trail, or how much this little token cheers us. It gives us a certainty that she has as yet been uninjured, and that she is cunning enough to outwit Darromed, though the scoundrel is no fool."

"Not he!" replied the Guide. "I know to my cost that he has the ferocity of the bloodhound, the cunning of a fox, and the untiring patience of a wolf. My heart beats strangely as I take this little cross in my hand, and I think that the darling girl has worn it on her neck."

"Come on, come on!" cried the young agent.

"It is I who feel impatient now."

"You shall not accuse me of being slack in my duty," replied the Guide, quickly. "Forward!"

A few steps further they felt a current of fresh air blowing in their faces, and pushing on, they saw the star of evening, Venus, shining clear and bright above their heads. They were at the bottom of a funnel-shaped ravine, containing in the circuit of its circumference perhaps a thousand yards. The sides were fresh and green, and bright flowers bloomed about their feet. Stepping so suddenly from that strange cavern-home under the light of the stars came like a shock to them, and for a moment every one paused to drink in the delicious atmosphere.

"It is a beautiful world," said Gilbert, "and looking upon such a scene as this, one is only thinking it strange that such a scene can be outraged by the strife and passion of man. And yet without doubt, this peaceful spot has been the witness of savage warfare, bloodshed and death. Here ends our work for to-night, as it is impossible to say which way the trail leads until morning."

"Must we lie idly here all night, knowing that every hour is placing a greater distance between us and Helen?" demanded Waterman, in an agonized tone.

"It is useless to go on," answered the Guide, "and yet the night shall not be lost, for I will go to the camp of Mack and tell him what we intend to do, and let him return to the fort. But, will you not be punished for leaving upon such an expedition without orders?"

"I have them already," answered Waterman. "Mine was always a roving commission, and Wayne told me that, after leaving Helen safely at the post, I should make it my business to examine into the state of the country east of the Miami, in which duty I was to call on you for assistance."

"Good; I am glad to know that you are not likely to get into trouble on account of this unfortunate affair. I will leave you now, and be off to camp."

"But, you will get back in time, I hope."

"If I am not here before daylight you can go on without me, for I shall be dead or a prisoner."

"Let me go with you, Gilbert dear," said the Irishman. "Deed an' I don't like to stay here, knowing that maybe ye are in danger."

"Cease your prate, Pat," ordered the Guide, sternly. "Remember that you are under my orders."

"I don't forget it, avick," said Pat. "I'll keep my wurrd too, and obey ye in ivry thing, but it comes mighty hard at times, 'dane an' it does. I'd like right well as I might go wid ye widout breaking others."

"It is better not," said the Guide, more kindly. "One can do this duty as well as two, and there is really so little danger in it that I would let you do it if you knew the country well enough to travel in the dark."

"Jist as ye say, masher," said Pat, submissively; "but ye don't come back sorra re-save me av I don't write me name in bloody letters upon the back av any blag'd Injins I mate from that time. Good-night til ye."

"Good-night, Pat," replied Gilbert. "The same to the rest. And Owasco, if I do not return, and there is always a possibility of loss, you will know what to do. Think of me as one dead, and go upon your duty like men, and never pause or falter."

The dark figure of the Guide was seen darting up the green side of the bowl-like valley in which they were ensconced, and it stood for a moment outlined against the sky, waved them a farewell and was gone. Handy Pat gave vent to a loud sniff of disapprobation as he turned his back to the others to cover his grief and sat down upon the turf rocking his body back and forth with that utter abandonment of grief of which only an Irishman is capable.

"Ochone, ochone! And now who will fight the battle or gain the day, when the man we like so well is gone? Who so brave or so for-

ward in danger, or so riddy to stand by a friend as he? Wirra, wirrasthru, but it's dead an' kilt I am wid graif."

"Don't take it so much to heart, Pat," said Waterman, kindly. "He'll keep his word and come back to us if he can."

"Yis, an' that's thrue; if he can. But, how the devil can he off the bloody Wyandots take him, the haythen rid naygurs?"

"Gilbert is very brave and cunning," said Owasco. "No fear that he will come to harm; for the Great Spirit is always near to watch over the children whom he loves."

"Do you think that Darromed will travel all night with Helen?" asked Waterman.

"No," replied Owasco, "white girl very brave, but she will be weary. He will give her rest until he can see the trail."

"Then we ought to catch him before many hours after daybreak."

"Perhaps yes, perhaps no; who can tell, since it is all as the Great Spirit wills."

He wrapped himself in his blanket and lay down at the foot of a tree, and was soon asleep. Overcome by fatigue, Waterman followed his example, and did not wake until he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and opening his eyes with a start saw the Guide bending over him.

"Come!" commanded Gilbert; "it is time to be on our way."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 235.)

Too Late.

BY BESSIE P. STRONG.

You have been wronged; at least you think so, and perhaps you are right. This is not your first trouble with your mother: little differences have arisen before, and little differences have swollen into great ones, out of which have grown angry words, and angrier looks. You said some bitter things in those moments, and afterward, when it has been too late, you have longed to take them back. For some time your mother has been growing more unjust toward you, so you think; more irritable, but lately you have received a letter accepting you as governess in a family living in a distant city; so, in this your last quarrel, when you utter your time-worn threat of leaving home, you read your letter to give it weight, then you go into your room, and take a chair by the window.

As you sit there, some slow, grand strains of music fall upon your ear, and looking down the avenue, you see a band of soldiers crossing below. That must be a funeral-march, you think, as with almost nervous dread you watch the ranks file slowly by: you hope you are wrong, you do not care to think of death just now. More soldiers; a carriage; another, and behind that something larger; the trees hide it for a moment, but you see waving black plumes, and soon the long hearse comes into view. Inside of that lies the coffin, and inside of that—well, you do not know, but some one's friend is dead: your friends may die. The long line passes out of sight, but still the dirge comes back to you: those deep, rich chords with their sad rise and fall—what matters it to the corpse!

You leave the window and go down into the yard; two weeks more, you say, and you will never live at home again. The past twelve months have not been happy ones for you, yet, as you look around and listen to those strains of music, a deep yearning fills your heart; you wish—almost against yourself—that you might live those months over; perhaps you have a vague idea of doing better. Ah! many have made that wish, but all in vain. God tries us once, but he never gives back any of the past!

The music is dying away; it has come to you in the full force of its meaning; it is a dirge for the past, now dead; a dirge for the present, surely, silently dying. You are startled when you think how the moments are passing, and you reach out as if to stop them. Your hand closes on nothing; the leaves wave to and fro, and time moves on. So the moments grow into hours, and the hours into days, and all creep slowly but surely by, and take their stand among the things of the great past. Once they were yours, but now they are yours no longer.

Often during that last week you find your mother making some little things for you; once you see traces of tears on her cheeks, and a sudden impulse prompts you to beg her forgiveness for your harsh words, but something holds you back, and you pass through the room in silence.

The day has come at last; almost the hour. Your trunk is packed, your traveling-dress is on, and you go down into the yard, to see it once more before you leave. You sit under the old apple-tree, the apple-tree under which you played so often when you were a little girl; your mother used to make tea-parties for you out there; and some times she would join you, and pretend she was company, and how you would laugh at her droll efforts to get into one of your doll-chairs: she laughed too, then—somehow or other you have not heard her laugh much lately. And musing so, you find yourself, before long, with tears rolling down your cheeks. Oh, God! could you only go back to those happy days! Ha, no! you can't go back! you are going forward, steadily forward. Close by is the little summer-house covered with honeysuckles, and inside is the deep, cool well. You remember as you look that way, how often you have come from school, hot, dusty and tired, and have quenched your thirst at the well in the shady summer-house, and with this picture, comes the image of your mother standing in the open doorway, waiting to welcome you. She does not seem so glad when you come home now, but that was years ago, and both you and she have changed since then. Those careless, happy, school-girl days! they have all gone too! Again the hot tears fill your eyes as you turn from this picture. You look at the vine-covered arbor, and recall the many times you have sat there, and laughed and chatted gayly with your young friends, but as you go over it all in your mind, you remember how sometimes your father was away, and your mother sat by the window alone, and you wonder why you never thought of that before as you do now.

Ah, well! even those days of fitful pleasure, alternate joy and grief, have all gone by, and now—the leaves of the trees stir and rustle in the summer wind; there was always something of mystery to you in this silent, ceaseless motion of the leaves; you always felt they were talking, and to-day as you watch them, they seem to repeat over and over some rhyming lines you once wrote: "If you pause now and think there is this to remember; the summer is passing, 'twill soon be September, and the fall of your life, like the fall of the year, is rapidly, rapidly drawing near." Yes, July is nearly over, only August will be left then. You are twenty-one now: when you were sixteen you looked at those figures as a long way off, but they have come at last, and twenty-

two will soon follow. You turn to go in but stop for one more look; the leaves swing gently to and fro—a strange fear creeps over you; you feel that the next time you watch that motion something will have happened. For a few seconds you falter, divided as it were against yourself, one self says stay, the other go, and a fate impels you to obey the latter.

The two weeks are ended, and you say good-bye; then you step into the carriage and ride off. Eagerly, almost feverishly, you watch them all: father, mother, sisters and brothers, till one by one they go in; but as you watch the house you see some one come out on the porch again: it is your mother. You must go back! you must speak just one word to her! You rise to your feet and call the driver, but your mother turns and goes in, and you sit down again, and look back till the old house, with its porches and climbing roses, fades out of sight.

A governess' life! it drags slowly enough! Three months have passed, and you sit in your room one October afternoon, reading. A servant comes in and hands you a telegram. "No bad news, I hope, Miss." "I hope not," is all you say, but you lay it down to wait till she leaves the room. Then, with a heavy sinking at your heart, you open it, and read: "Your mother is very sick; come home." You cover your face with your hands, and sit crushed as one who has realized a foreboding.

A few days later, and you are riding up the long avenue; you lean far out of the window and strain your eyes as you look ahead. Near, nearer you come; further you lean from the window, breathlessly, hopelessly. Yes, it is there! you see it at last; gently in the autumn breeze, back and forth, and to and fro, just as the leaves moved, swings the long, black crape.

Archie meets you at the door: "Oh, sister!" he sobs. "Mother is dead!" "Where is she?" you ask. "In the front room." You pass him quickly, and go up-stairs. At the door you pause a moment. How still the house is! She is lying on the bed. Asleep! Yes; she must be! she cannot be dead! You take her hand, but start back and let it fall heavily. Great God! how cold it is! Then you kneel by the bedside and wait to see when she will wake. There is a sad, weary look on her face, as if she had been very tired. Perhaps she was; you never thought about it much before, but she had a great deal to do. Her hair is streaked with gray, and there are lines of care and sorrow on her brow. Did you ever cause her sorrow? One by one the great tears roll down your cheeks. Oh, could you only go back to your happy childhood when you used to play under the apple tree! or to those school-girl days; could you only begin back there, how much kinder you would be to your mother! You had never thought of her dying! God knows if you could only have had that picture in your mind, you would never have said those words. Where is now the memory of her injustice and unkindness, with which you used to stifle your pangs of remorse when she was living? Gone! all gone! Instead, there only comes a troop of gentle, loving acts; you remember how oft—for you were a sickly child—the single word "mother," uttered in the dead of night, has brought her to your bedside; how she has bathed your fevered brow; moistened your lips; smoothed your pillow; and with caresses and loving words, made you forget your pain. Ah! me! have you forgotten the dear old songs she used to sing to you? And is there only this to think of now?

Nay, there is more; you remember how once she broke down, and sobbed because you had been very harsh to her, and how your heart was wrung then, and you knelt down beside her and begged her to forgive you, and tried to soothe her grief; and she forgave you, but oh, her face! Great God! can you ever forget it! and now you creep close to her, and lay your face on hers, so cold and dead, and you call her, but she makes no sound. Oh, how thin and tired her hands are! Would you wish to bring her back to earth? God knows you would! If only for one short hour! You would take her dead hand in yours; you would stroke her hair and face, and say, "Dear, dear mother!" Then you would clasp her round her neck, and with your head upon her shoulder, sob, and tell her how you love her, and how sorry, oh how sorry you are, to think you have ever grieved her. You sob all this out now, but the cold, dead lips cannot kiss you, or say as they once did, "Dear child, we have both been wrong; let us begin anew." Begin anew? Ah! no! it is too late! The past has gone to eternity, and no tears or prayers can ever recall it. You had a mother once, but you were unkind to her; now, God has taken her home.

Rip Van Winkle.

THE GERMAN LEGEND OF PETER KLAUS.

This legend has a peculiar interest, as being the source from which Washington Irving is said to have obtained the idea for his "Rip Van Winkle."

PETER KLAUS was a goatherd of Sittendorf, and herded his flocks in the Kyffhausen mountains; here he was accustomed to let them rest every evening in a mead surrounded by an old wall, while he made his muster of them; but for some days he had remarked that one of his finest goats always disappeared some time after coming to this spot and did not join the flock till late. Watching her more attentively, he observed that she had slipped through an opening in the wall; upon which he crept after the animal and found her in a sort of cave, busily employed in gleaning the oat-grains that dropped down singly from the roof. He looked up and shook his ears amid the shower of corn that now fell down upon him, but with all his inquiry could discover nothing. At last he heard above the stamp and neighing of horses, from whose mangers it was probable the oats had fallen.

Peter was yet standing in astonishment at the sound of horses in so unusual a place, when a boy appeared, who, by signs, without speaking a word, desired him to follow. Accordingly, he ascended a few steps and passed over a walled court into a hollow, closed in on all sides by lofty rocks, where a partial twilight shot through the overspreading foliage of the shrubs. There, upon the smooth, fresh lawn, he found twelve knights playing at ninepins, and not one spoke a syllable; with equal silence Peter was installed in the office of setting up the ninepins.

At first he performed this duty with knees that knocked against each other, as he now and then stole a partial look at the long beards and slashed doublets of the noble knights. By degrees, however, custom gave him courage; he gazed on every thing with firmer look, and at last even ventured to drink out of a bowl that stood near him, from which the wine exhaled a most delicious odor. The glowing juice made him feel

as if reanimated, and whenever he found the least weariness he again drew fresh vigor from the inexhaustible goblet. Sleep at last overcame him. Upon waking, Peter found himself in the very same inclosed mead where he was wont to tell his herds. He rubbed his eyes, but could see no sign of dog or goats, and was, besides, not a little astonished at the high grass and shrubs and trees which he had never before observed there. Not well knowing what to think, he continued his way over all the places that he had been accustomed to frequent with his goats, but nowhere could he find any traces of them; below him he saw Sittendorf, and, at length, with hasty steps he descended. The people whom he met before the village were all strangers to him; they had not the dress of his acquaintance, nor yet did they exactly speak their language, and when he asked after his goats all stared and touched their chins. At last he did the same almost involuntarily and found his beard lengthened by a foot at least, upon which he began to conclude that himself and those about him were equally under the influence of enchantment; still he recognized the mountain he had descended for the Kyffhausen. The houses, too, with their yards and gardens, were all familiar to him, and to the passing questions of a traveler several boys replied by the name of Sittendorf.

With increasing doubt, he now walked through the village to his house! It was much decayed, and before it lay a strange goatherd's boy, in a ragged frock, by whose side was a dog worn lank by age, that growled and snarled when he spoke to him. He then entered the cottage through an opening which had once been closed by a door. Here, too, he found all so void and waste that he tottered out again at the back door as if intoxicated, and called his wife and children by their names; but none heard, none answered.

In a short time women and children thronged around the stranger with the long, hoary beard, and all, as if for a wager, joined in inquiring what he wanted. Before his own house to ask others after his wife or children, or even of himself, seemed so strange, that, to get rid of these questions, he mentioned the first name that occurred to him, "Kurt Steffen!" The bystanders looked at each other in silence, till at last an old woman said, "He has been in the churchyard these twelve years, and you'll not go there to-day." "Velten Meier!" "Heaven rest his soul! he has lain these fifteen years in the house he will never leave."

The goatherd shuddered, as in the last speaker he recognized his neighbor, who seemed to have suddenly grown old, but he had lost all desire for further question. At this moment a brisk young woman pressed through the anxious gazers, carrying an infant in her arms, and leading by the hand a girl of about fourteen years old, all three the very image of his wife. With increasing surprise he asked her name. "Maria!" "And your father's?" "Peter Klaus! Heaven rest his soul! It is now twenty years since we sought him day and night on the Kyffhausen mountains, when his flock returned without him. I was then but seven years old."

The goatherd could contain himself no longer; "I am Peter Klaus," he cried; "I am Peter Klaus, and none else," and he snatched the child from his daughter's arms. All for a moment stood as if petrified, till at length one voice, and another and another, exclaimed, "Yes, this is Peter Klaus! Welcome, neighbor! Welcome, after twenty years!"

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LOVE IN SCHOOL.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Her face, my boyhood's early pride,
Shines down from days of yore,
Her head upholstered with such hair
As never goddess wore.

At school we studied very hard—
To win each other's smiles,
And thought much less of lakes and seas
Than of dividing aisles.

If at recess she was kept in
I showed devotion true,
By doing something 'gainst the rules
So I'd be kept in, too.

In every writing-lesson I
Her name for copy took,
And got my ears in many a box
For scribbling up the book.

Whenever I for breaking rules
Was made the switch to feel,
She sympathized with me so much
She always helped me squeal.

In writing bills and notes of hand
I never made much stir,
But I improved my handwriting much
In writing notes to her.

My figures on the blackboard then
Indeed were very small,
But still, in her dear eyes, I out,
The largest figure of all.

In throwing her full many a kiss
I oft had cruel luck
And came to grief, for other girls
Complained that they were struck.

I looked into the future then,
That doubtful universe,
And fondly thought to win a name—
And oh, that name was hers!

I missed my lessons with chagrin,
Yet dearly loved the Miss,
And cared much less for printed books
Than for a printed kiss.

I built my hopes of high renown
In the world's throng to move—
Was a professor even then—
Professing lots of love.

Alas for dreams of early youth,
How are they faded all!
She wed the butcher long ago—
You'll see her in that stall.

Dick Darling in Mexico.

BY LAUNCE POYNTE.

VI.—THE ARREST.

DONA PEPIITA DE CASTELLAR, accompanied by Dick Darling and a venerable old gentleman with long, gray beard, and wearing spectacles, sat in the great hall of Don Jeronimo Ribera's house at Durango.

The evening was delightfully cool and agreeable after the intense heat of the previous day. The great stone hall was nearly dark, the only light coming through the open windows from the full moon. Darling had abandoned his usual ranchero dress, and adopted one which bore more resemblance to an uniform. It was a uniform, and the sword at his side proclaimed that Dick had done with concealments. He had come out boldly in the midst of an Imperial city in the dress of an officer of the Republican army, in which, as the peon spy had asserted, he bore a commission.

It was on the very subject of his imprudence in assuming this dress that the corregidor and his niece were now speaking to him. "Oh, Don Ricardo, how imprudent!" said Pepita, earnestly. "If the Imperialists were to pay us a domiciliary visit, as they often do, you would be instantly recognized."

"I know it," said Darling, calmly; "but there is no fear of that. My presence is not suspected in the city, and the only people who would come here would recognize me just as quick in my ranchero dress. My person is well known in the army of your friends."

"Then why not disguise it, señor?" asked the old don. "It seems to me that you run a needless risk as it is."

"I will tell you, señor," said the American, in a low tone. "When I am out in the streets among strangers, the risk is my own, I am in an enemy's city. If I am in disguise and am recognized, I am liable to be taken as a spy. If taken as a spy in your house, you are liable to the same penalties. As an officer in the Juarez army, in uniform, I am simply a prisoner of war, if taken. You do not know me. I forced myself into your house, and fear of your life alone prevents you giving an alarm. You understand me?"

"I confess I do not," said the old man, in a puzzled tone.

"Well then, Don Jeronimo," said Darling, rising and tapping his sword hilt, with a smile, "you are only my prisoner. Do you understand that?"

The don looked more mystified than ever, but Pepita, who had been watching them with great intension, suddenly clapped her hands, with a merry laugh.

"I see, I see," she said; "you are a daring ruffian who has taken us all prisoners, and we dare not alarm the soldiers to have you arrested. It is well planned. But you forget one thing, Don Ricardo."

"And what is that?"

The girl's beautiful face grew serious, and her eyes filled with tears, as she rose and came to lean on his shoulder.

"Simply this, Don Ricardo: Neither Pepita nor her uncle are so base as to desire to shelter themselves while you are in danger. Let who will come, you are our friend, our hero, our preserver, and nothing will make us deny it."

Dick Darling was silent a moment. Then he took Pepita's white hand, and pressed it closely in the darkness. It was his only reply. Presently the young lady started away from him, with a nervous laugh.

"Come," she said, "we shall mope to death in the dark. Let us talk. What do you propose for us?"

"That you and your uncle and myself should leave here about dawn and fly to Juarez camp," said Dick. "It will be a long journey, but the end will be safety. The army is about to move, and Escobedo is confident of success. Here, or even in a convent, you are always exposed to the insults of Cortina, who has publicly boasted that he will wed the heiress of the Hacienda Castellar."

"And who will never do it, while she carries a poinard and dares to use it," cried Pepita, fiercely, clenching her white teeth, and looking like a roused tigress. "Wed him! the bandit, the spoiler of churches, the murderer, the cut-throat! For what does he take me?"

"For a weak girl, Pepita," said the American, gravely, "who has plenty of spirit, but no strength. If he once had you in his power, of what avail were all your struggles? They could only secure, at best, your death."

"Better that than union with him," she said, shuddering.

"You have reason to say it. But I wish to see neither end," replied Darling, calmly. "To that end, you must fly to the camp of the President, where Senora Escobedo, the wife of the general, has promised to see to your comfort till the end of the war."

"It is a good plan," said the old don, with

a sigh of relief. "I would to God that you were safely married, Pepita. These rich damsels in a troubled country are a great responsibility, Don Ricardo. Come, Pepita, give us some music, child. We grow dull, talking over grave subjects in the dark."

Without waiting to be pressed, unlike our fashionable young ladies, Pepita rose and fetched her lute.

"What shall I sing, *tio*?" she asked her uncle.

"Give us my favorite, Nina," he said, "the Gondola Song, that your mother used to sing when Manuel and I were boys, and we both in love with her. Ah, Pepita, they were happy times, that will never come back. I never hear that air but I think of your mother and Manuel. What a handsome couple they were! Sing, child."

Touching a soft prelude on the lute, Pepita sang the low ditty her uncle had requested:

GONDOLA SONG.

Pulsing wavelets, softly lipping, kiss the gently-gliding keel;
Whispering breezes lift the curtain canopy beside;
Seagulls dash athwart the sunshine over waters blue as steel,
Where the leaping dolphins fling the rainbows o'er the tide.

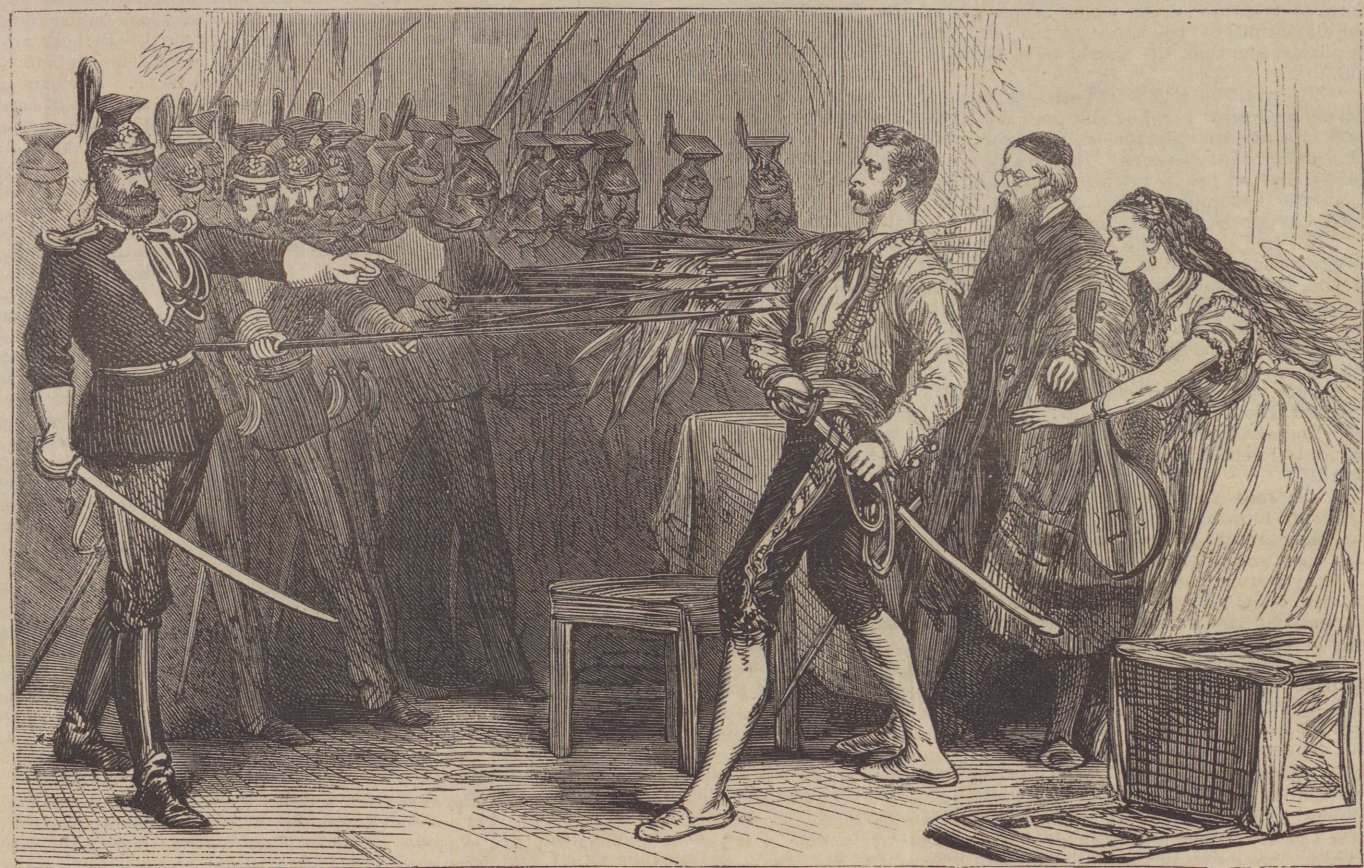
Whispering, murmuring, moments swift fly,
Vanishing swift as the fleece in the sky,
While o'er the sunlit sea gently we float,
Love, the bright helmsman, guides deftly our boat.

The last words of the song still echoed in the dark corners of the hall, when the sudden clatter of weapons was heard at the door. A moment later, the tall form of Cortina, followed by a crowd of lancers on foot, rushed into the hall, and the peaceful little group was broken up.

Dick Darling leaped to his feet and half drew his sword, only to find the points of a dozen lances in front of his breast, while Cortina, with drawn sword, pointing menacingly at him with his left hand, cried in his harsh tones:

"Down with your arms, fool! Do you wish to be transfixed and skewered like a fowl? Down with your arms, I say. I am General Cortina, and I arrest you in the name of his majesty, Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico."

"Don Ricardo, for mercy's sake, do not resist," said the low, pleading tones of Pepita,



"Down with your arms, fool! Do you wish to be transfixed and skewered like a fowl?"

close behind him. "Uncle, uncle, are you mad? What can you do against all these men?"

For a moment both parties stood as if petrified, facing each other and hesitating what to do.

Old Don Jeronimo Ribera had drawn a sword which lay beside him, and stood facing the grim line of lancers, as bravely as if he had been a young soldier himself. Dick Darling remained glaring at Cortina, as if he were half resolved to throw away his own life for the pleasure of killing the bandit.

At last the young man allowed his discretion to overcome his rage. He suddenly thrust back his sword into the sheath.

"I surrender, Colonel Cortina," he said, haughtily. "Let your men put up their lances."

The bandit chief immediately dropped his sword and assumed an air of courtesy.

"You are sensible, capitano," he said. "Where is your comrade? We have information that there are two of you here."

Dick Darling laughed sarcastically. "You surely don't wish me to surrender him, colonel, it being your own business to catch him."

"I do, sir," said the bandit, fiercely. "Moreover, be pleased to recollect that I'm not colonel, but General Cortina."

"Since when?" demanded Darling, sarcastically.

"Since I entered this city," said Cortina, coldly. "Now call your friend, and surrender him."

"Very good," said Dick, with a peculiar smile. Then raising his voice, he shouted in English:

"Jack Hardy, fly for your life. The Greasers have got me."

The hoarse voice of Hardy answered from the dark recesses of the house:

"I'm off, old fellow. Keep up your—"

The rest was lost in a rush of the lancers in the direction of the voice, as they started in a hopeless chase.

Dick turned to Cortina with a laugh. "You would have me call him. Catch him if you can. I am your only prisoner to-night."

All for a Button.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

A LARGE, delightful room, that extended from front to rear of one side of the Carroll farm-house, with French windows opening on a wide veranda, that was completely embowered in the graceful, fragrant foliage of a luxuriant Madeira vine;—this at the back end of the cool, half-darkened room, while the front end was one huge bay window, over which

was trained a honeysuckle and a rose-bush, that twined and interlaced their branches, leaves and flowers, until the wide glass case-ments were almost hidden in a perfect bower of rare fragrance and cool, dark beauty.

Within, the room wore its summer dress of white matting and bamboo furniture; lace curtains and tulle-draped portraits. On the marble mantle were vases of flowers; on the several graceful little tables arrayed around the room as only an artist-eyed and artist-handed woman could arrange them, were low crystal dishes, where stemless blossoms floated, and long, spray-like vines wreathed in emerald lengths.

Altogether, a remarkably cosy room, that spoke of refinement and taste, and that, too, of woman.

Just now, when we introduce our reader to this summer parlor in farmer Carroll's big, cool, comfortable house, where plenty always reigned, and not a little luxury and style since Miss Jessie had come home from boarding-school, there were two gentlemen enjoying the shade, the quiet, the restfulness that it offered. One, big, bronzed, in shirt-sleeves and linen pants, with a face the very embodiment of honesty, candor, simple bravery, was farmer Carroll—pretty Jessie's uncle, who had been both uncle and father since her mother died the night Jessie's blue eyes opened.

The other was Cleve Remington, a stylish, well-dressed young fellow, for all he was lolling in such easy indolence in the wide bamboo rocking-chair—a young man whom Mr. Carroll had known ever since Cleve was "knee-high to a grasshopper"; a well-bred young fellow, who had fallen head-over-heels in love with Jessie Carroll at a school commencement in Boston, the year before; and who, in coming to "Wheat Sheaf"—(that was what Jessie christened the picturesque stone house surrounded by seas of waving grain)—had not only gained Jessie's affections, but turned the heads of all the young girls in the country side.

But, he was true as steel to Jessie; and this very day, on the eleventh of July, Cleve Remington had driven down from home—he lived in a little country town near Boston, where he was laying the foundation for a future successful business—to get Jessie to name the day, and to hear uncle Oliver give them both his cordial consent and warm blessing.

meeting through life! how they steal the very sweetness from the honey of existence—Cleve Remington thought so, even when the dinners were unexceptionable, the breakfasts models of housewifely skill; he couldn't help moralizing over it, even when the freshest flowers exhaled their sweetness in tiny vases on the table, when the silver snow in purity of hue, rivaled the falling snow in purity of hue.

He couldn't help it because—dinner, lunch and breakfast were invariably late. Too late entirely for his business convenience, and whose habitual tardiness barely saved their perfection from censure.

He had spoken to Jessie very kindly, very considerately on the third or fourth occasion of her delinquency; she had received the counsel in the same spirit in which it was given, made several spasmodic attempts toward rectifying the error, and then—slid back into the old groove.

She was so pleasant, so pretty, so happy, that Mr. Remington could not find it in his heart to keep forever mentioning it to her; although this lateness of meals, a slight tardiness in being ready on time for church, or the lecture, or at a social, worried him not a little; and more than once uncle Oliver Carroll's words occurred very forcibly to him, even while he utterly scouted the idea that Jessie's fault made him ineligible for congratulation.

This especial night of which we write, when little Mrs. Jessie awaited her liege in their elegant bedroom, whither Cleve always came for his kiss, preparatory to his adjournment to his dressing-room to rearrange his toilet, there laid on Jessie's bureau a letter, whose envelope bore a stamp dated three days back. It was addressed to Jessie, and had evidently been used more than once, judging from the jagged, handled appearance it presented.

Jessie had laid a spray of blush-roses over it—carelessly, of course; and the roses had withered as they lay, neglected and forgotten by Jessie, as the fateful letter beneath them had been.

So she fastened the syringe in her braids to her own tasteful satisfaction, and then listened to Cleve's unmistakable footsteps on the stairs, and through the hall till they brought him within the room—so proud, so handsome, so well-dressed, so like a prince, she said to herself.

He was all dressed and ready for his cup of coffee! She was wide enough awake then, and sprang confusedly up.

"Quarter to four! I'll call Bettine."

She started to cross the hall in her bare, dimpled feet, but paused at sight of Cleve's face—sterner, more vexed than she ever had seen it.

"Then you did not make your arrangements in time? You need not call Bettine; it is too late now."

And the buttons not sewed on, either! Jessie's heart sunk, and her hands trembled as she fastened on her dressing-robe and slippers.

"I am so sorry—but you can wait just a minute, can't you? I was dreadfully tired last night, and I meant to fix your shirts, but—"

"You don't mean to say you have neglected them? Oh, Jessie!"

It was his first cross word to her, and Jessie was not an angel, and so, in fault though she knew she was, she flared up.

"I can't think of everything! And if you are not able to wait five minutes while I sew them on, you can go without."

She flew down-stairs for her sewing-basket, selected her buttons and sewed them on really very expeditiously, while Cleve stood by, in stern, silent displeasure, watch in hand.

Then she tossed them in the valise; he snapped the catch, gave her rather a cold kiss, and rushed off, in hot haste—to find the train just gone, and none until noon again.

Whatever his thoughts were, his lips kept faithfully; but as he went to his office—deciding instantly he would not return home—his eyes were full of a gleam and glow hardly compatible with mildness.

The day but one after, Jessie lingered over her dinner, wondering what the news would be from "Wheat Sheaf," and rejoicing in the fact that every blessed shirt of Cleve's was faultless as regarded buttons, and every sock darned so nicely that the wearer would devoutly wish the whole article were one big, soft, delicate "darn."

And there came, right among these comfortable reflections, a letter, ominously thin, whose calligraphy was certainly Cleve's, whose post-mark was the village nearest "Wheat Sheaf."

Jessie opened it nervously, and read: "You had better come at once. Uncle Oliver died this morning after signing his will that left everything to his sister-in-law. When I see you, I will explain how I was late in arriving here, which, added to your neglect in writing, and your uncle's irascible temper, has made you five thousand dollars poorer than you would have been—the sum willed you in another document he refused to sign."

And Jessie realized, then, that the missing buttons on her husband's shirt—with other things—had cost her considerable, monetarily, although it started a train of thought that ended in a vigorous resolve to do her duty better in small things; a resolve she kept, too, through severest struggles to quench the pertinacious old habits.

And to-day, Cleve tells her it was well worth it.

"Oh, never mind; I'll write to-night, positively."

Jessie took his hand and laid it against her cheek very caressingly as she spoke.

"Do, darling, without fail. You know how sensitive he is to even a fancied slight; and one from you—"

"Who expect to be his heiress, you know—"

Jessie laughingly interrupted him; he went on, gravely:

"I would have said from you from whom he naturally expects a great deal of love and gratitude."

"That is so—dear old uncle Ol," and Jessie's face sobered down, and Cleve bent to kiss the white, serious forehead.

"I'll be down to dinner in ten minutes," he said, as he opened his dressing-room door.

"Jessie!"

She started at the sound of her husband's voice, who called her name in such a peculiar tone. She laid down "Folle-Farine" on the window-ledge, marking her place with a Gloire De Dijon rosebud, and turned to see Mr. Remington's stern, pained face as he crossed the room, holding a telegram in his hand.

"Uncle Oliver is not expected to live another day. He has sent for me to come at once and prepare his will. You can't tell how glad I am you wrote last night to tell me."

Jessie averted her face suddenly; then covered it with her hands—uncle Ol, dear, fatherly old, old uncle, dying!—dying!—and she had been so interested in "Folle-Farine" the evening before that she had not once thought of writing, for all she promised so faithfully.

That was probably the hardest part of the blow to Jessie; but she was the soul of truth, and so she bravely raised her tear-wet face.

"Oh, Cleve, I didn't, I didn't!" And down she plunged her cheeks again among her fingers. He never said a word; he folded the telegram in its envelope, and sat down in his chair by the gas-draw, attempting to read the evening paper.

"Jessie," he said, after several minutes, "I

must take the first train in the morning for Wheat Sheaf, which will necessitate my leaving home at four o'clock. Can you have me a cup of coffee before I go? And I wish you would look over the shirts in my drawer and see to several missing buttons. It is probable I will be gone several days if uncle Oliver is really so ill; and you will come when I telegraph."

Of course Jessie promised earnestly, and even started to give the order for coffee at four to the cook; but Cleve had several directions to give her, and messages to take that would be best not left until morning.

Then, when she rung for Bettine she found she was out; and so Jessie decided to go and "look over" the shirts Cleve would want—with just a little flush of shame that his shirts needed any attention. But she so hated to sew on buttons and darn stockings (as if no other woman hated such work, too!) and when she had fixed the light, and piled five of the indispensable garments on the foot of the bed, and brought the low chair and wheeled up the hassock ready for the thimble job of replacing several absent buttons, Jessie was quite exhausted, and discovered she had forgotten to bring her thimble, and button-bag, and needle and thread.

She sat down a minute to think about uncle Oliver, and—don't censure her, for she was so young and full of life and health—wonder if he had left her his property, or some of it. Poor, dear uncle Ol! what a pity he was going to die; and Cleve had to get up so fearfully early; and about mourning—she knew everybody would expect her to wear it; and those buttons were away down stairs in her work-basket in the dining-room closet; and, somehow, "Folle-Farine" had made her unaccountably drowsy.

The hall clock struck twelve when Jessie discovered she had fallen asleep, and been sleeping since before nine. She awoke with a start and a shiver, and remembered, with a passing pang that was discovered in overwhelming sleepiness, that she had not sewed on the buttons, and that Bettine was not made aware of the need of her early services.

"I'll have to waken myself at three o'clock," she said to herself, as she hurried off her clothes; and five minutes later she was in dreamland.

Alas for human expectations generally, and Jessie Remington's in particular! for the next thing she was cognizant of was Cleve's voice in her ear, and his hand on her shoulder.

"Jessie, come! it's quarter of four, and you've only just time to say good-by. Will I find my valise packed down stairs?"

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It was his first cross word to her, and Jessie was not an angel, and so, in fault though she knew she was, she flared up.

"I can't think of everything! And if you are not able to wait five minutes while I sew them on, you can go without."

She flew down-stairs for her sewing-basket, selected her buttons and sewed them on really very expeditiously, while Cleve stood by, in stern, silent displeasure, watch in hand.

Then she tossed them in the valise; he snapped the catch, gave her rather a cold kiss, and rushed off, in hot haste—to find the train just gone, and none until noon again.

Whatever his thoughts were, his lips kept faithfully; but as he went to his office—deciding instantly he would not return home—his eyes were full of a gleam and glow hardly compatible with mildness.

The day but one after, Jessie lingered over her dinner, wondering what the news would be from "Wheat Sheaf," and rejoicing in the fact that every blessed shirt of Cleve's was faultless as regarded buttons, and every sock darned so nicely that the wearer would devoutly wish the whole article were one big, soft, delicate "darn."

And there came, right among these comfortable reflections, a letter, ominously thin, whose calligraphy was certainly Cleve's, whose post-mark was the village nearest "Wheat Sheaf."

Jessie opened it nervously, and read: "You had better come at once. Uncle Oliver died this morning after signing his will that left everything to his sister-in-law. When I see you, I will explain how I was late in arriving here, which, added to your neglect in writing, and your uncle's irascible temper, has made you five thousand dollars poorer than you would have been—the sum willed you in another document he refused to sign."

And Jessie realized, then, that the missing buttons on her husband's shirt—with other things—had cost her considerable, monetarily, although it started a train of thought that ended in a vigorous resolve to do her duty better in small things; a resolve she kept, too, through severest struggles to quench the pertinacious old habits.

And to-day, Cleve tells her it was well worth it.

Beat Time's Notes.

WHEN I was a small boy, I was making my entrance in the rear of the circus, under the canvas—the front door not happening to be there—when a fellow came along, just as I had got half-way under the canvas and was looking around to see if there was anybody in there to pay my money to, and gave me a kick which was altogether complimentary. But he didn't make anything by the operation, by a long sight. He only kicked me clear under, and I got to see the show for nothing. They kick the wrong way sometimes.

SOMEBODY or other asks me the following arithmetical question: If something or other runs at the rate of so many yards in several minutes, and something else or other takes after it or anything else at the rate of four pecks to the bushel or sixteen acres to the square foot, how long, between you and I, or anybody else, will it take to shingle the inside of all outdoors? Now I have applied the rule of three to this problem, hot, thrown the product out of the window, multiplied the multiplicand by the divisor, upset the sugar-bowl, knocked over the pepper-sauce, and find that the answer is—is still remaining to be told. What's your answer?

BEAT TIME.